

The Gospel and Culture Part 2: Suffering, Miracles, and the Supernatural

Goals of the Series

- ❖ To submit fully to the teaching from God's Word
- ❖ To discover what God's Word says about modern cultural topics
- ❖ How are we as Christians to engage with each of these topics
- ❖ Become equipped to take the Gospel in the culture
- ❖ Let the Word of God be our ONLY source of authority

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. - 1 John 2:15-17

"I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and [you] will find a little marginal note [that says]: 'In this age [people] could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended.' Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another." Charles Spurgeon

Goals of this particular night

- ❖ Learn what God's Word says about the miraculous and supernatural
- ❖ See how suffering plays a part in the life of a believer
- ❖ Have a Biblically-based understanding of these controversial topics

Questions/concerns/challenges

- ❖ Why did God do so many miracles in the Bible in our culture?
- ❖ If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He heal more people?
- ❖ If God is all-loving, why does He allow so much suffering?
- ❖ Can we really "walk in the supernatural" like some churches teach?

Gospel Foundations

- ❖ There exists one God, who is eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Exodus 15:11 – Lord, who is like you among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, revered with praises, performing wonders?

- ❖ All things were created by God, through God, and for God

Colossians 1:16 – For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.

- ❖ God is Holy, which makes all of creation accountable to His standard

Revelation 4:8 – Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.

- ❖ Humans were as image bearers of this Holy God

Genesis 1:26-27 – Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

- ❖ We were created to exalt His glory to the ends of the earth

Isaiah 43:7 – everyone who bears my name and is created for my glory. I have formed them; indeed, I have made them.”

- ❖ Any rebellion against this God warrants a just punishment of His wrath

Psalms 5:4-6 – For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot dwell with you. The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who tell lies; the Lord abhors violent and treacherous people.

- ❖ Through the sin of one man, all human beings have become morally evil and sinners

Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.

- ❖ Our rebellion against God has created a separation from Him and a guilty standing, which warrants eternal destruction

Isaiah 59:2 – But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.

- ❖ The Tension in Creation

- If God is just, how does He forgive sin without payment?
- If God is holy, how does He obliterate sin without obliterating us in the process?
- If God is love, how can He save guilty sinners?

Proverbs 17:15 – Acquitting the guilty and condemning the just— both are detestable to the Lord.

- ❖ God substitutes Himself in our place

- Dies in our place (1 Peter 3:18)
- Pays our punishment (1 John 4:10)
- Reconciles us to God (2 Corinthians 5:18)
- Removes our guilt (Psalm 103:12)
- Makes us spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:4-5)
- Declares us as righteous (Phil. 3:9)
- Adopts us as sons and daughters (Romans 8:15)
- Fills us with His Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22)
- Transforms our desires (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Makes a place for us in the New Earth (Revelation 21:3)

This is the *MOST IMPORTANT* decision you will ever make in your entire life!

- Will you turn to Christ?
 - Repent for sin, receive His forgiveness, live with Him forever?
- Will you turn from Christ?
 - Live in sin, stand under the judgement of God, endure His wrath forever?

Miracles

Some myths about miracles

- ❖ "Miracles can happen to you if you only just have enough faith"

John 11:43-44 - After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

- ❖ "Miracles are God's way of showing you He wants to bless you"

Luke 10:1-2 - Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu each took his own firepan, put fire in it, placed incense on it, and presented unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them to do. Then fire came from the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.

- ❖ "Miracles are the only way to authenticate the Good News!"

Luke 16:27-31 - "Father,' he said, 'then I beg you to send him to my father's house—because I have five brothers—to warn them, so that they won't also come to this place of torment.' "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' "No, father Abraham,' he said. 'But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "But he told him, 'If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.

- ❖ "By living your life a certain way, you can access a life of miracles"

Acts 12:1-2 - About that time King Herod violently attacked some who belonged to the church, and he executed James, John's brother, with the sword.

"Do you really think these miracles actually happened?"

- ❖ Many authors to these miraculous accounts were eyewitnesses

2 Peter 1:16 – or we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

- ❖ There are multiple sources telling the same story
 - Example: Matthew, Mark, Luke & John
- ❖ The authors already proved their reliability in other ways, such as specific names, and specific places

Luke 2:1-2 – In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

- ❖ If can believe the greatest miracle, every other one will be easier to grasp
 - Jesus predicted His death and who would betray Him...

Luke 9:22 – "It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day."

John 13:18 – I'm not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats my bread has raised his heel against me.

- Multiple times

Luke 9:43 – "Let these words sink in: The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men."

- Jesus died exactly like He said He would

Acts 2:23 – Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

- Jesus predicted He would come back to life three days after His death

Matthew 17:23 – They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised up."

- Even His own disciples were unsure of the Resurrection

Luke 24:9-11 - Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things. But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women.

John 20:24-25 - But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."

- And yet, these same men, soon after were willing to be persecuted, tortured, and ultimately killed for their belief that Jesus had come back to life

Acts 4:40-41 - After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name.

- If Jesus was this knowledgeable about His own resurrection, how much more knowledgeable is He about other miracles in the Bible?
 - Jesus believed there is a God that created everything

Matthew 19:4 - Haven't you read," he replied, "that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female,

- Jesus believed that Noah built an ark, and the earth was flooded

Matthew 24:37-39 - As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. They didn't know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be.

- Jesus believed Moses encountered a burning bush

Mark 12:26 - And as for the dead being raised—haven't you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?

- Jesus believed Jonah was swallowed by a fish for three days

Matthew 12:40 - For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

- Jesus believed Naaman's leprosy was healed by Elisha

Luke 4:27 - And in the prophet Elisha's time, there were many in Israel who had leprosy, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

So why are there so many miracles in the Bible?

- ❖ Miracles glorify God, not the recipient nor the person performing the miracles (except for Jesus who IS God)

Isaiah 42:8 - I am the Lord. That is my name, and I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.

Acts 3:1-10 - Now Peter and John were going up to the temple for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. A man who was lame from birth was being carried there. He was placed each day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for money. Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, "Look at us." So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. But Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. So he jumped up and started to walk, and he entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

- ❖ Miracles remove hinderances to God's unfolding plans

Acts 7:35-36 - This Moses, whom they rejected when they said, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge?—this one God sent as a ruler and a

deliverer through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. This man led them out and performed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

Acts 16:16-18 - Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. As she followed Paul and us she cried out, "These men, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God." She did this for many days. Paul was greatly annoyed. Turning to the spirit, he said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out right away.

❖ Miracles authenticate the Gospel

Luke 9:2 - Then he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Are miracles still valid for the church today?

❖ Some say no

- The gift of miracles died out along with the apostles

2 Corinthians 12:12 - The signs of an apostle were performed with unfailing endurance among you, including signs and wonders and miracles.

❖ Some say yes

- Miracles were performed by believers who weren't apostles

Acts 6:8 - Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 - A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good: to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues. One and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as he wills.

❖ No matter where you fall on this spectrum:

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- Acknowledge that Christ, the New Testament apostles, and the Old Testament prophets held unique authority
- Honor the incredible and unfathomable mystery of the Holy Spirit's work in the church today
- Seek spiritual gifts that edify and build up the body of Christ

1 Corinthians 14:12 - So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.

- Proclaim the Gospel to the lost and perishing
 - Trust in the authority and power of His Word
 - Ask God to authenticate His Word

Acts 4:29-30 - And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

- Be discerning according to the Word of God

2 Thessalonians 2:9 - The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders serving the lie, and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing.

The Supernatural

- ❖ We were created supernaturally

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female.

- ❖ We were saved supernaturally

Colossians 2:13-15 - And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.

- ❖ We've been born again supernaturally

Ephesians 2:1-7 - And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- ❖ We participate in a supernatural life

Romans 6:12-14 - Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.

- ❖ We will be resurrected supernaturally

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 - Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality.

The dangers of the supernatural

- ❖ One of our biggest issues is when we start craving for experiences and moments that are outside of Scripture
 - Some grow discontent with the supernatural lifestyle Christ gave us and begin to seek more "experiences"

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

- The temptation to receive these "experiences" will be great

Acts 8:18-19 - When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit."

- In an attempt to "hear from God," we may be hearing from our own flesh and therefore, we must be cautious

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 - Don't despise prophecies but test all things. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil.

- Not every "prophetic word" is from the Lord.

2 Chronicles 18:20-22 - "Then a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will entice him.' "The Lord asked him, 'How?' "So he said, 'I will go and become a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' "Then he said, 'You will entice him and also prevail. Go and do that.' "Now, you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit into the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the Lord has pronounced disaster against you."

- We must stay committed in edifying the local church

1 Corinthians 14:12 - So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church.

- ❖ We must not let "spiritual experiences" determine Spiritual maturity

Colossians 2:18-19 - Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism (severe self-discipline) and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

- ❖ God will work through us in extraordinary ways

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- ❖ God will work through us in ordinary ways

Romans 8:28 - And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- ❖ If we are in Christ, what do we lack?

2 Peter 1:3 - His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

- ❖ God does not withhold experiences, feelings, moments from us that are not best for us

Romans 8:32 - He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

- ❖ We learn contentment in our lives by trusting Him

Philippians 4:11-13 - Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- ❖ Yet, we desire more of Him in our life

Luke 11:9-13 - "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

How do we participate in the supernatural life?

"Be Filled with the Holy Spirit"

- ❖ Christ promises to send a Helper/Counselor

John 14:16-17 - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to

receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.

- ❖ God's Spirit, The Holy Spirit, then dwells in us when we become a believer

1 Corinthians 3:16 - Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

- ❖ The Holy Spirit works in us to sanctify us (makes us holy)
 - Our desires are changed.

Romans 8:5 - For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.

- Our disciplines are developed

Galatians 5:16-18 - I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit teaches us

John 16:13-15 - When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit guides us

Romans 8:13-14 - because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit intercedes our prayers before the Father on our behalf

Romans 8:26-27 - In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself

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intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit unifies us

2 Corinthians 13:13 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit produces fruit in our life

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- ❖ Some obvious conclusions:

- Without the Holy Spirit, we have nothing
- With the Holy Spirit, we have everything

What does it mean to "Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?"

"πληροῦσθε ἐν Πνεύματι"

- A Present-Imperative-Passive Verb, 2nd person plural
- ❖ An imperative
 - This is not a suggestion, rather a command to obey
- ❖ Plural
 - This instruction is for the whole church, not just the individual
- ❖ Passive
 - This is not about us possessing more of the Spirit
 - Instead, the Holy Spirit possesses more of us
 - We yield to the Holy Spirit's filling
 - Not a task we work to, but a lifestyle we surrender in
- ❖ Present
 - Not a one-time event
 - An on-going experience
 - The initial indwelling is a one-time experience
 - Filling with the Spirit is a gift given multiple times for multiple purposes

Acts 4:8 - Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them,

Acts 13:52 - And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7 - Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them

Suffering

- ❖ Suffering is an alien intrusion to God's good world, and will have no part in the New Heaven and the New Earth

Revelation 21:4 - He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

- ❖ Suffering is an effect of a sinful, corrupted world
 - There is no such thing as *karma*
 - However, built into God's perfect design, we may experience cause and effect

Galatians 6:7-8 - Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

- ❖ The effects of sin of individuals can cause suffering to others

Exodus 34:7 - But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.

- ❖ Other times, we bring suffering upon ourselves because of our sins

James 5:15-16 - The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

- ❖ However, not all suffering is because of a person's choices

John 9:1-3 - As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him.

If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He just eliminate all evil?

- ❖ If God eliminated every evil person, this would include ourselves

Romans 3:1–12 - There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

- ❖ In the end, God will judge every last deed

Ecclesiastes 12:14 - For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

- ❖ Every day the Lord doesn't return means salvation for someone else

2 Peter 3:14-15 - Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found without spot or blemish in his sight, at peace. Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him.

- ❖ Any act of evil ultimately makes His glory known

Romans 9:22–23 - And what if God, wanting to display his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction? And what if he did this to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory—

If God is all-loving, why do Christians still suffer?

- ❖ The call of a Christian life is a call to come and die

Matthew 16:24 - Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me

- ❖ Oftentimes, our desire is to be like Christ, but treated better than He was
 - The desire of every believer should be to be like Christ, including His sufferings

Philippians 3:10–11 - My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

- ❖ Suffering humbles our pride and self-exaltation

2 Corinthians 12:7 - Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself.

- ❖ Suffering strengthens and solidifies our faith

1 Peter 1:6-7 - You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- ❖ Suffering produces maturity in our faith

James 1:2-4 - Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

- ❖ We learn obedience through our suffering

Hebrews 5:8 - Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

- ❖ Suffering teaches us not to love our life this side of Heaven

Philippians 1:23 - I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—

The Christian and Suffering

- ❖ A high view of God—His sovereignty, His wisdom, His goodness, and His glory—is essential for understanding suffering in the life of a believer and this world

Isaiah 46:9-10 - Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.

Isaiah 55:8-9 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the Lord's declaration. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 8:28 - We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- ❖ A humble view of self—our sinful nature and limited global/eternal perspective— is essential for understanding suffering in our life and the world
 - God is not accountable to us
 - We are accountable to God

Job 38:1-7 - Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me. Where were you when I established the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? What supports its foundations? Or who laid its cornerstone while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Job 42:5-6 - I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.

The ultimate reason suffering exists is to exalt the glory of God's grace through the suffering of God's Son for the salvation of undeserving sinners.

- God permits sin to enter the world
 - God ordains suffering to enter the world
 - God sends His Son into the world to suffer for sinners
 - God saves undeserving sinners for the glory of His grace
- ❖ Not a single moment of suffering will be wasted!

Genesis 50:20 - You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.

- ❖ Fulfilling the Great Commission will include suffering, but eternity will be worth it!

John 15:20 - Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 - For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what

is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

1 Peter 4:12-13 - Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.

Revelation 22:1-5 - Then he showed me the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's main street. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Objections/Questions:

- ❖ What's the deal with speaking in tongues?
 - Tongues are languages that may need interpretation
 - Tongues are intelligible at Pentecost

Acts 2:4 - Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:8 - How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language?

- Tongues are possibly unintelligible elsewhere in Scripture

1 Corinthians 14:19 - yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

- Speaking in tongues involves prayer or praise directed at God, spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker

1 Corinthians 14:2 - For the person who speaks in a tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him; he speaks mysteries in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:14-17 - For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing praise with the spirit, and I will also sing praise with my understanding. Otherwise, if you praise with the spirit, how will the outsider say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you may very well be giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up.

- Speaking in tongues in public:
 - Involves an interpreter who reports to the church the meaning of what is spoken.
 - Characterized by self-control.
 - Must edify the church and glorify God.

1 Corinthians 14:26-28 - What then, brothers and sisters? Whenever you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything is to be done for building up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, there are to be only two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God

- Speaking in tongues in private
 - Will be edifying for self

1 Corinthians 14:4 - The person who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

- Should all believers speak in tongues?
 - Speaking in tongues is not normative for evidence of New Testament faith
 - Speaking in tongues is not a necessary expression for New Testament faith
 - Should be seen as every other spiritual gift, which is useful for building up the body of believers, and not placed on special pedestal or completely ignored

- ❖ Does God still communicate in dreams and visions?
 - In the New Covenant, one of the signs of the Holy Spirit is that some believers will have dreams and visions

Acts 2:17 - And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

- Some believers in Acts are given dreams/visions

Acts 9:10-12 - There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." "Here I am, Lord," he replied. "Get up and go to the street called Straight," the Lord said to him, "to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing his hands on him so that he may regain his sight."

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 - I know a man in Christ who was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether he was in the body or out of the body, I don't know; God knows. I know that this man—whether in the body or out of the body I don't know; God knows—was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a human being is not allowed to speak.

- Dreams/visions will never add to, take away from, or contradict the Word of God
- Believers are to not find their basis for spiritual maturity in dreams, but rather their intimacy with Christ

Colossians 2:18-19 - Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

- Be open but be discerning.
- Test everything in accordance with the Word of God

1 Thessalonians 5:20 - Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.

- ❖ Is it possible to be "slain in the Spirit"?
 - There are instances in Scripture where people fall to the ground in the presence of God

Ezekiel 1:28 - The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the likeness of the Lord's glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

Daniel 10:7-9 - Only I, Daniel, saw the vision. The men who were with me did not see it, but a great terror fell on them, and they ran and hid. I was left alone, looking at this great vision. No strength was left in me; my face grew deathly pale, and I was powerless. I heard the words he said, and when I heard them, I fell into a deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

John 18:6 - When Jesus told them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground

Acts 9:3-4 - As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Revelation 1:17 - When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last,

- Observations from passages:
 - Focus is always on God/Christ, never on individual who fell over
 - None of these moments were forced, worked-up, or peer-pressured
 - No Biblical evidence for Spiritual maturity of those who have been "slain"
 - We are commanded in Scripture to seek daily repentance and faith, not spiritual experiences
 - Believers could enter a "trance" or an overwhelming amount of Holy Spirit's presence that causes them to fall down, but "slain in the Spirit" is not a Biblical term and should be avoided.

- ❖ Why are people not healed today like they were in the New Testament? It seems like everyone was healed!
 - Jesus did everything in accordance with the will of the Father

John 5:19 - Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does these things.

- The apostles did not manipulate the power to heal, but only healed when God allowed it to happen

Acts 14:8-10 - In Lystra a man was sitting who was without strength in his feet, had never walked, and had been lame from birth. He listened as Paul spoke. After looking directly at him and seeing that he had faith to be healed, Paul said in a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet!" And he jumped up and began to walk around.

- Not everyone was healed in the New Testament
 - Jesus is recorded healing only one man at the Pool of Bethesda

John 5:2-16 - By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the disabled man answered, "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, someone goes down ahead of me." "Get up," Jesus told him, "Pick up your mat and walk." Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk. Now that day was the Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat." He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick up your mat and walk'?" they asked. But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

- The man at the Beautiful Gate was not healed during the time of Jesus

Acts 3:2 - A man who was lame from birth was being carried there. He was placed each day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering the temple.

- Epaphroditus almost dies when he is with Paul

If you have any questions throughout the night, please text 310-710-3028

Philippians 2:27 - Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

- Paul instructs Timothy a home remedy for his sickness, not divine healing

1 Timothy 5:23 - Don't continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

- Paul is not healed immediately from the "thorn in his flesh"

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 - Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness."

Practical Takeaways:

- ❖ Avoid anything supernatural that does not find its basis in Scripture
 - Including, but not limited to: Healing crystals, moldavite, Ouija boards, "saging" your room, "cleansing your aura," psychics, mediums, tarot cards, etc.
- ❖ Seek to grow in the supernatural lifestyle that Scripture describes
 - "Be filled with the Holy Spirit"
- ❖ Seek Christian maturity, not spiritual experiences
- ❖ Believe that God still is doing miracles today
 - Pray confidently
 - Pray for His glory to be revealed
- ❖ Trust that any amount of suffering ultimately is conforming you to be more like Christ

"Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles— and he certainly can—is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So, although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing. Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though he could have. Jesus said, 'Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?' But he didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by. God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything he does is good. If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you'd change it, you'd make it worse. It wouldn't be as good." – James Montgomery Boice, diagnosed with liver cancer and died eight weeks after sharing this with his congregation

Recommended Reading

For further study on the topics covered in tonight's sessions, see the resources listed below. Please note, however, that Hope Chapel Youth ministry does not endorse everything contained in these resources. As always, we urge you to examine these resources and the topics covered in this study in light of the truths of God's Word.

- ❖ *Mercy Revealed: A Cross-Centered Look at Christ's Miracles* – Gerald Bilkes
- ❖ *Why I am Still Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* – Jack Deere
- ❖ *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs* – John Foxe
- ❖ *Miracles* – Craig Keener
- ❖ *Providence* – John Piper
- ❖ *The Bruised Reed* – Richard Sibbes
- ❖ *All Things for Good* – Thomas Watson
- ❖ *Can We Trust the Gospels* – Peter J. Williams

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