Suffering

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, October 26, 2025
PASSAGES	Psalm 73; 2 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4; Hebrews 12; Habakkuk 3; James 1; Deuteronomy 8
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:10:10 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Most suffering arrives without its backstory attached, and Scripture never apologizes for that. What it gives instead is a perspective that produces resolve, permission to keep asking for relief as long as it takes, and the knowledge that the hand behind it belongs to a Father who disciplines the children he loves.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Not all suffering is productive. Wanting more money you cannot get, or defying God to the bitter end, is pain that teaches nothing.
- Asaph's envy of the prosperous wicked nearly took him out. What steadied him was not relief but perspective — he went into the sanctuary and discerned their end.
- Scripture names wildly different causes for illness and calamity: God's judgment, God's providence, a demon, an unexplained ailment. Usually we are not told which.
- Paul's thorn was "a messenger of Satan" that *God* gave him. Even when you suspect the enemy's hand, you take it to the Lord — Satan is not the manager.
- Knowing there is a purpose did not stop Paul asking three times, or Jesus asking that the cup pass. Persistence in asking is what Jesus called faith.
- Hebrews 12 says the hostility of sinners is the discipline of a Father. Being left without discipline is the frightening option, not the safe one.
- Israel's wilderness suffering was mostly hunger, thirst and uncertainty — not persecution. That is the kind most of us actually get.

- Suffering well is a discipline like prayer or Bible reading. Suffering badly — embittered, hasty, walked away — is always available.

▶ 1:24:21

Matt wanted to put suffering in the same category as prayer and fasting: a Christian discipline. Not because suffering is scarce — "some people might think, man, I'm good at that, I suffer all the time" — but because we are immersed in it, Jesus calls us to follow him into it, and doing it well does not happen by default.

What does not count

▶ 1:24:59

He drew a line first. Rob a convenience store, go to jail, feel terrible about jail — that is God's justice, and fine. But rob it successfully and be miserable you did not get more? That is Ecclesiastes 5:10, where the one who loves money is never satisfied with money. Real pain, no yield.

▶ 1:25:26

The other example was the gnashing of teeth Jesus describes at judgment, drawn from Psalm 37, where the wicked watch the faithful rewarded and vanish like smoke, like a dream you wake from. Matt's reading is that the gnashing is not agony in the moment. It is defiance, held to the end, changing nothing about the verdict. Pain spent resisting a will you cannot overturn.

1. Perspective does not remove the problem — it gives you resolve

▶ 1:27:37

Psalm 73 opens on the confession that "truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart" — a line that can set you up for real pain when your life does not feel like it. Two verses later Asaph admits his feet had almost slipped, and names why:

> "For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind."
>
> PSALM 73:3–5 ↗

▶ 1:29:30

They even seem to be getting away with it — "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" Which is where Asaph's heart was actually heading: *all in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.* Matt pointed out that the question is old and honest. Jeremiah asks it, Job asks it, Habakkuk asks it. Why do the wicked seem to be doing fine.

▶ 1:30:43

The turn comes in verse 16, and it is not circumstantial. Asaph goes into the sanctuary and discerns their end. He does not get rich. His life does not get easier.

> "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you."
>
> PSALM 73:23–25 ↗

"Sometimes we feel like we have to rehearse that maybe just to convince ourselves," Matt said. A desire for luxury and ease can be frustrated, especially by not getting it. A desire for God is the one that gets satisfied — those who hunger for righteousness are filled, those who seek him find him, and James 1:5 promises wisdom to whoever asks, without fault-finding. The joints still hurt. What changed for Asaph was resolve.

2. You will usually not be told why

▶ 1:34:57

Then a fast tour of causes, which was the most useful stretch of the message. Gehazi chases Naaman down for the reward Elisha refused and comes back with the leprosy Naaman was cured of (2 Kings 5:20–27) — no devil to rebuke there; that was God. Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell the field or give all of it, but they lied about it and died (Acts 5:1–11). Herod is struck down in his arrogance (Acts 12:21–23). And at Corinth, where some arrived at the Lord's table already full and drunk while others went home hungry:

> "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died."
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 11:29–30 ↗

▶ 1:37:38

Now set that beside Timothy's stomach and his frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23). Timothy was close enough to Paul to have been prayed for constantly. Was he an original gluten intolerant? Was it sin, a fallen world, a bad cook? Cause unknown. Paul reads providence into his own illness in Galatians 4:13 — it was a bodily ailment that brought him to preach to them in the first place — and then, in 2 Timothy 4:20, leaves Trophimus sick at Miletus with no discernible purpose at all. And in Mark 9:25 the cause is a mute and deaf spirit.

Judgment, providence, plain illness, a demon. Matt's warning to his own tribe was pointed: charismatics who cast one thing out can end up with "when in doubt, cast it out" as a whole theology. We cannot assume anyone's illness is a secret sin, a devil, God's judgment, or celiac disease.

▶ 1:40:08

Which is where the thorn comes in. Paul is explicit about who gave it and why: a messenger of Satan, given *to him*, to keep him from conceit over the revelations he had received.

> "Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses… For when I am weak, then I am strong."
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 12:8–10 ↗

Paul did not rebuke the devil. He took it to the manager — and Matt's aside is worth keeping: Satan is not the manager. In Job 1 and Job 2 he reports when summoned and cannot touch Job without permission. We are not living in a dualistic universe with two rival kingdoms trading the upper hand. "He has to report for staff meetings when he's summoned."

▶ 1:43:31

Note also that Paul knew the purpose and asked for it to be lifted anyway. So did Jesus in the garden — *if it is possible, let this cup pass; nevertheless, your will be done.* And the widow in Luke 18:1–8 gets held up by Jesus as the picture of faith precisely because she asked for justice over and over. Matt named the strain honestly: wanting to submit to God's ultimate decision while still asking for healing, still asking for deliverance, still asking after the last prayer went unanswered. It feels disjointed. It is what we have to live with, because the Bible never apologizes for us not knowing the whole story. At the end of Job, God never sits down and explains the first two chapters.

3. If you are his child, this is discipline

▶ 1:47:26

Persecution first, briefly: 1 Peter 4:12–16 tells us not to be surprised at the fiery trial as though something strange were happening, and to rejoice insofar as we share Christ's sufferings — while ruling out the man in jail for robbing the gas station who wants to call it persecution.

▶ 1:48:28

But the part Matt wanted underlined is what Hebrews does with that hostility. Verse 3 says sinners are the hostile ones. Verse 4 says the struggle is against sin. And then verses 5 and 6 hand the whole thing to a different author entirely:

> "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."
>
> HEBREWS 12:5–6 ↗

If you are left without discipline, Hebrews says, you are illegitimate and not a son. "So I guess it should be a frightful thought when we're at too much ease." And then the verse Matt said deserves a gold medal for being underrated: for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness *to those who have been trained by it* (Hebrews 12:11). Trained by it, not bucking against it.

▶ 1:51:44

Habakkuk is told God is raising up Babylon — a work "that you would not believe if told" (Habakkuk 1:5). Hostility that looks satanic in the literal sense of the word, opposition, and turns out to be the hand of God. What matters is the response:

> "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food… yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation."
>
> HABAKKUK 3:17–18 ↗

▶ 1:54:06

Suffering is not optional — 2 Timothy 3:12 says all who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted. Suffering *well* is. The failure modes are specific: embittered against God, walked away, or hasty conclusions — I guess he is not good, I guess he is not powerful. James 1:2–4 asks for steadfastness to have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Matt's question for the room: what is the curriculum the Holy Spirit has you on right now.

▶ 1:56:17

He closed the point where Hebrews closes it, with the wilderness generation (Hebrews 3:12–17) — and the reason that example matters is that their suffering was almost never an army:

> "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone."
>
> DEUTERONOMY 8:2–3 ↗

Thirst, hunger, not knowing where this is going or when it ends. Circumstantial, and therefore the version most of us are actually handed.

Where it lands

▶ 1:59:11

The floor under all three points is Job 13:15 — "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him." Matt held both halves at once: I am going to ask for that healing, and for protection and deliverance, and I am going to ask again tomorrow and again next week. And if he slays me, my hope is in him.

He ended on why the analogy holds. In John 12:24–26 the kernel of wheat falls and dies and there is a harvest, the one who loves his life loses it, and then: whoever serves me must follow me. Jesus' own suffering and death were not an endorsement of suffering in general — they accomplished something, atonement and our reconciliation to God. So when he asks us to follow him into ours, the parallel does not collapse.

> *"It's not going to be a bad analogy — oh yeah, my suffering and death had purpose, but yours is just going to be totally pointless. That's not the God we serve."*

And he is patient with the asking. The man born blind in John 9 waited a long time for a miracle that came so the works of God might be displayed in him. So ask, and if the answer does not come the way you wanted, ask again. How we carry ourselves inside the ambiguity is itself of great use to us: steadfastness, persistence, joy, and being received into glory.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Ecclesiastes 5:10
- Psalm 37:1–13
- Psalm 73:3–5
- Psalm 73:23–25
- James 1:5
- 2 Kings 5:20–27
- Acts 5:1–11
- Acts 12:21–23
- 1 Corinthians 11:29–30
- 1 Timothy 5:23
- Galatians 4:13
- 2 Timothy 4:20
- Mark 9:25
- 2 Corinthians 12:8–10
- Job 1:6–12
- Job 2:1–6
- Luke 18:1–8
- 1 Peter 4:12–16
- Hebrews 12:5–6
- Hebrews 12:11
- Habakkuk 1:5
- Habakkuk 3:17–18
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- James 1:2–4
- Hebrews 3:12–17
- Deuteronomy 8:2–3
- Job 13:15 (KJV)
- John 12:24–26
- John 9:1–3

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where has watching someone prosper by cutting corners made you wonder, with Asaph, whether keeping your hands clean was worth it?
2. Matt distinguished pain that yields something from pain that yields nothing. Which kind have you been carrying, and how can you tell?
3. When you cannot tell whether something is God, the enemy, or just a fallen world, what do you tend to do with the not-knowing?
4. Hebrews says being left without discipline is the frightening outcome. What does that do to how you read the hardest thing in your life right now?
5. What is the one thing you stopped asking God for? What would it take to ask again this week, and keep asking?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZPjpZYzLDo&t=4210s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.