

Good morning, church. My name is Lonnie Ferrero. When Pastor Arlen, as he's sharing that story, I'm just chuckling who just left and we, in God's providence, he brought us together. And yeah, a very similar story.

Myself, just so you guys know a little bit about me, me. I grew up in San Diego, California and my mom, my parents were divorced when I was young, my mom, probably I was not on 9 or 10. She started going to this Lutheran church And then we all started going to this Lutheran church. I have, well, then we were five, one of my brothers was living with my dad, but five of us were at the house.

And so we all started going to this Lutheran church. And so then we were going to this Lutheran church and my teenage years, you know, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, we were there and you just go, right? Because your parents take you to church, but there was no reality in my life. I learned some things.

I learned the gospel. I learned core things about Christianity and so forth, but there was nothing real. You would have church, and then they would do Sunday school and the kids and everybody would split off. Usually I would go down towards our classroom and you could take a turn through this other hallway and then kind of sneak out and we would sneak up to 7-eleven and you know there was a video game there and we would you know we would play video games and and so forth and then we would watch the clock and then run back and get back to the church in time to when they got all dismissed we would just kind of blend back I did we did that a lot and then I moved in with my dad when I was 13 right around there 13 or 14 and all the way until I moved out.

He remarried when I was 18 and then I was the last boy at home and I was kind of a third wheel him and his new wife and so I moved out and moved out on my own and so forth. I had some friends from high school who one of them was, he was a Christian in high school and he was a buddy and we kind of hung out here and there, but another friend, he invited another friend to church and then that guy made a profession of faith in Christ and then those two invited another one of our friends to church and that was the church of Gadda prophecy and then that guy made a profession of faith in Christ and so then those three guys invited who was at that time my best friend to church with them. And then he made a profession of faith in Christ. So you got four guys now and then me, right?

So I was the last guy. So they're hammering me, right? Me and this last guy, you know, we lived your stereotypical pagan life together. We do, we would run around and do all kinds of stuff, and yet we had our hobbies.

We shot a lot of billiards, you know, at the time when we were going to this pool hall and stuff, and then I moved down to the beach. I was a surfer, and my life ambition was to live on the sand. I wanted to live on the sand because, you know, swells aren't always, you know, the surf's not always big, and then you're always trying to figure out. There was no internet then, of course, and you could call on the phone and try and figure out what the waves were doing, but if you weren't around to see it, you would miss it, right?

And I would hear about it from somebody or whatever. So my life ambition was to live on the sand, so I would never miss another swim. So I did when I was, I think I was 19 and moved down there. I moved in actually.

It was like three's company, I had two female roommates and anyways, they start talking me about Jesus and I don't you know I'm I don't want that you know thanks for no thanks kind of thing and and then and then I think they kept talking that we would go shoot pool and and that and that fourth guy was your name was mark is mark he's still still around but he you know we would go shoot pool and he would talk to me about Jesus right so we're shooting billiards and he's telling me about Jesus and you know no thanks and whatever and and anyways the Lord's guard working on my heart and then he invited me to this men's retreat right and by this time one of the girls had moved out and me and the

other girl we had moved to this to another a different condo right you know right on beach there and and the Lord's working on my heart and I'm just like I don't know what's going on you know I don't all I know is I start feeling terrible something something is wrong what is wrong is like I'm sick and I don't know I'm like I had this tightness in my chest and I didn't know what it was and it was there for just weeks I couldn't figure it out and he's telling me about Jesus and I'm partying you know I'm trying to you know and there's this there's this sense there's this thing going on you know what it was and bites me this men's retreat and what's a men's retreat yeah what is that he says well that's where a bunch of guys go get together for a weekend and they go up on a mountain somewhere and they and they learn they learn about the Lord and yeah probably not you know not really and doesn't sound doesn't sound all that great and and and and and the Lord he just kept you know this was a few weeks out and and and they're praying for me come to find out they're all praying that I'll go I didn't know that until afterward but conviction conviction conviction I didn't know what it was at the time and finally it's just like through a series of circumstances it's like all right you know it's like the Lord brought me to my knees and I okay you know I gotta call them and hey I'll go you will go I go that was the first the second weekend of January 1990 so we go up to this men's retreat and it was different as one can imagine I had no exposure to well, Pentecostal stuff. You know, I only knew a Lutheran church, right? So all this stuff's going on and I'm like, what in the world is happening here, right? And anyways, that Saturday night, that was January 13, 1990.

I am now, I just turned 36 years old in the Lord. And about 9.30 at night or so. I was leaning against the back wall and everybody's there all praying, you know, praying for the church and praying everybody's praying and there's, you know, everybody was just kneeling everywhere and I'm the only guy sitting in the chair. Everybody's kneeling but me.

I should kneel. So I did that I get down on my chair trying to hide and the Lord just you know the Lord saved me convicted me and showed me how my rebellion and my sin reminded me of all those times that I intentionally was burning his grace and he chased me down it's like a like a like a hound like the hound of heaven he he chased me down and I was running as fast as I could, but he caught up to me and he saved me. I didn't even know what happened. I started bawling.

I didn't even know why. I'd never cried. My dad was from Macho, Mexican, told me Latin, you know, men don't cry. That's how I was raised.

It's the first time in my life really I cried like that. I didn't know. I was like, man, I'm halfway through that. I'm like, Lonnie, you're crying.

What are doing and I was like man this feels good just to get all this out you know and then I was kind of cried out I sat in the chair and and and and everybody's you know people had left the room and and I'm just like I sat in the chair and I was like I'm gonna live my life for you now Lord that's what I want to do I mean I didn't even I never prayed a sinner's prayer as it were I just I just said I'm sorry I'm so sorry I just kept saying that over and over again all that stuff flashing through my mind and the Lord forgave me and the Lord saved me and like we were singing you know he he rescued that the we stand in awe of God and his and his mercy and his love and his grace and his compassion and how he's faithful and how he he will he doesn't give up. There's nothing that anyone can do. The greatest message there is, not probably most certainly, the greatest message there is. The most important thing is what Jesus Christ has done on the cross on our behalf.

So yeah, so I get saved, I come back down, they called, right, and they said, hey, you longy got saved, and you know, some of the people in the church, they said, yeah, we'll see. They knew me, right? And anyhow, we come back and they say, hey, hey, you know, you want to go with us to church tonight. It was a Sunday afternoon.

They had a Sunday night service and I'm like, oh, I don't know, you know. And then they're like, well, just in case you know, just so you know that if you go tonight, you know, the pastor's name was Jack, brother Jack, they call them brother Jack. is he always makes everybody stand up and share what the and I'm like I don't know I don't like getting in front of people I was always petrified to stand in front of people and and then it was like this reminder you're gonna live for me right and I'm like yeah okay yeah let's do it so I went and that's where started and then you know it's like you know I was in a house on the beach and it was kind of a party house people would come and you can imagine if you've ever been to the beach and you walk along the boardwalk or to stand there you see these houses and a whole bunch of people there on the road well that was our place and the Lord I go back and when But I get back on a Sunday night, and there's a bunch of people at my house, and they're all sitting around the table playing this drinking game, and, and, and, and, and, Lordy, I come in, hey, you know, come and sit down, and I go, and they're all my friends, right? So I went and sat down, and they're doing the thing, and they hand it to me, and I'm like, nah, like, what are you, sick, are you, are you all right, or, no, I just no thanks why not I don't know I don't know I couldn't explain it what had happened was I was born again I was dead and now I'm alive and and and those who are alive in Christ, the Lord changes your affections.

The Lord changes your desires. He changes your heart from the inside and everything, the whole world, your thinking, your reasoning, your perspective, everything changes because you were dead and you had a love for darkness like Jesus says in John 3:19. Men love darkness. I was agape-ing, if that's a word, darkness and not light.

But God so agape-ed me that He saved me and now my love was for life, not death. I met my wife a couple years, two and a half years later, we got married and she's actually the granddaughter of two churches of God pastors on both sides. Both grandfathers were churches of God and prophecy pastors and so she kind of grew up in that organization and all that stuff, what our pastor only shared about, went through all that. But what?

Then how did I wind up with Calvary Chapel? Well, I wound up in Calvary Chapel because I was searching on the radio. I'm a baby Christian. All my friends took off.

I didn't want anything to do with me after that. I was kind of by myself. My roommate, she was avoiding me. So, I'm just like, I'm going to Bible study and the church kind of adopts me as they're, you know, I bring me into the fold, I kind of have a new family, and yeah.

So that goes on for a couple of years, I met my wife, we get married, we're in this organization. I started learning all the things like, like, like I passed on, I was sharing about, you know, this doctrine and all this kind of stuff. Well, I get on the radio and I stumble on Southern California, that's where Calvary Chapel began. And they have a flagship radio station down there called K-Wave, 107.9, K-W-V-E San Clemente.

And anyhow, I stumble on this radio station and I hear this guy teaching, and I'm, ah, it's got to be something with the Bible. And I hear this guy teaching the Bible, and I'm like, wait, he's just teaching the word. And I'm like, what is this? I never heard anybody teach the Bible like that.

He was just going verse by verse and explaining every single verse and explaining every single phrase. I'm like, everything I've been exposed to at that point was just this verse or that verse or whatever. And I'm like, oh man, suddenly I had a new life ambition, I want to learn the Bible like that. I want to know every single verse.

I want to be familiar with every single verse of Scripture. So I started just going where I could park and get the signal was weak in San Diego. It was coming from Orange County, which is up the coast. And I would go and park where I could do different times of the day, get different pastors and time slots.

At five o'clock I'm studying Galatians, and at 5.30 I'm going to be studying whatever, Romans or seven o'clock. These different time slots, all these different books of the Bible. I'm just, I got my spiral binder and I'm learning the word, right? And then the Lord, when that whole thing started to happen with it, I kind of started realizing.

I started Bible college. They offered Bible college at nine and I started taking night classes. And they have these things called Chuck tapes, okay. What it was as part of your Bible college, you have to study through the entire Bible as Pastor Chuck taught through the entire Bible.

And it was the 3,000 series they called it and you had to listen to all these tapes study through the whole Bible with them and take notes and take these little tests and so forth for each tape. So I'm doing them in midst of that. And I'm at church one night and it was a Sunday night or a Wednesday night. I remember I was at the sound board and what it was was the Lord, I'm studying.

And I was in 1 Corinthians and it was the part about the proper use of gifts. And I'm sitting there and then the spirit starts moving in the church and I'm kind of looking at my Bible and I'm looking up going, wait, you know, hold on, wait, wait. And as the Lord was telling me, hey, it's time to, it's time to, I'm moving you. I'm like, okay, but Lord, these are the only people, the only family I know.

And it's time it's time to and I saw and it's some other time. This is the readers digest version Okay, so there's some other things and and the Lord moved and I said, okay, I don't I'm moving on I'm gonna go to a Calvary Chapel. I just don't know which one And my wife she had been bugging me for a while. We need we need to go we need to go and you know And I should have listened, you know how you learn you learn that the Holy Spirit, right as a married man You learn that, you know, the Holy Spirit, he leads the man to lead his family, but he often uses his wife to do it.

And you learn to hear his voice through her voice, right? And she was right the whole time, and you know, that's usually the case anyway. And so we went, and out west, Southern California, there's Calvary chapels, they're like sheets, okay? That's my best illustration here.

There's one here, you go down the roadways, there's another one, that's how it is there. There's no sheets out there, right? Out there, it's 7-Eleven and Circle K, but coverage apples are all over the place, right? And so I'm okay, I'm going to go to one.

So we, the Lord led us to the one, we ended up being there, it was 93, ended up being there until we moved here in 2013, that was 20 years that we were there and started ministry in 94. adult. I was a young adult pastor. I did that until 2008 and the Lord through the senior pastor, he had been bugging me for a couple of years to start a Spanish fellowship.

I'm half Mexican and speak Spanish. So I started a Spanish Bible study that grew into a church And I was fastening that for five and a half years until 2013. The Lord called us here. And I didn't know why, but he did.

And he actually, I'm thrilled, you guys, by the way, I'm thrilled to be here today. And the reason is, is because the Lord called, when he called us, myself, my wife, my kids, he called us to West Virginia. And I served at Calvary Chapel of Morgantown as assistant pastor. I was there for four years from 2013 to 2017 and then in 2017 the Lord transitioned us to Brownsville and we've been at Calvary Chapel Brownsville since whatever it is now that's coming on nine years now and I'm assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel Brownsville.

The reason that I'm thrilled is because you guys, you see the Lord said go, right? and make disciples, and he sent the apostles to go and make disciples. In fact, okay, so here we are, I'm sorry. Turn to Acts

chapter 16.

We're going to look there. Acts chapter 16. Go and make disciples, right? Of all the nations, right?

He gave the apostles the great commission. And so what did they do? Well, the apostles went out and they planted churches. And the great commission is fulfilled, is being fulfilled as churches are established and as churches grow.

So right now this morning, you guys, we all, we are all fulfilling God's great commission. The discipleship, salvation and discipleship process is happening right here right now. And this is a fulfillment. She said, well, I haven't gone, the Lord hasn't sent me off to some, you know, foreign land or something like that as a missionary like we're going to read about the Apostle Paul here.

That's true. But I've discovered that a missionary is not where you are. A missionary is who you are. Wherever you are, you are the fragrance of Christ.

And you know, it's funny thing about a fragrance. can't hide it. If I pour some perfume or something and I close it in my hand and I walk around, what happens? You're going to smell it, right?

And that's who we are. And the Lord diffuses the knowledge of His presence through us, as it were, in every place. And we come together and we congregate and we worship and we study His Word and we lay our lives and we renew our commitment to Him and we are reminded. All of these things happen as we fellowship with one another.

And so to be here today myself, it's a tremendous privilege because You guys, this is the field that the Lord is working right next to the one that He has me working. In fact, it's next to the one that I was working at. So it's kind of like, you guys, what the Lord is doing here with this fellowship is there's a field there, there's a field here, there's a field there, there's a field over here, Southpitch. And the Lord is fulfilling His purposes and accomplishing His work and building His kingdom.

And to be here with you guys today is, well, I'm thankful. It is a tremendous honor. It's a tremendous privilege. So Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas.

So let's look at verse 16. So now what happened is we went to prayer that a certain slave girl possess what the spirit of divination met us who brought her master's much profit by fortune telling. This girl followed Paul and us cried out saying these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaimed to us the way of salvation and this she did for many days. But Paul greatly annoyed turned and said to the spirit I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her and he came out of that very hour.

But when When her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought him to the magistrates and said, these men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city, and they teach customs which are not lawful for us. Being Romans to receive or observe, then the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. So Paul and Silas, they are in Philippi. This is where the Philippian church is born. We have the letter to the Philippians.

This is where the Philippian church started. How did they get there? Well, they had this is their second missionary journey. They had gone around their first missionary journey.

That is Paul and Barnabas they go out on their first missionary journey and then they say if you go back in Chapter 15 after some days Paul says to Barnabas in verse 36 Let's go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they're doing So we want to go back and visit the other churches and then Paul and Barnabas bled over John Mark and that's another story But Paul takes Silas and they go off and they start visiting these churches, right? And so they come to this church and that church and Derby and Listerine and so forth and and and they want to Now look look look look with me a verse 6 of chapter 16 when they had gone through the Fergie and the region of Galatia They were forced they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia and after they had come to Misia They tried to go to Bethany, but the Spirit did not permit them So passing by Misia, they came down to Troyes, and a vision appeared to Paul on the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us. Now, after he had seen the vision, immediately we started to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So how did they get here? Well, they're going back. They go through Galatia. That's where we get Galatians.

Galatia is a region. This is all modern-day Turkey, okay? kind of Western and Southern part of Turkey and so they go and and they're trying to go into other regions on the on their on their missionary journey they're visiting the churches but they're speaking the Lord's leading so that the work can expand and they try and go into Asia and the Lord forbids them and they try and says to go to Bethany the Lord and the Holy Spirit doesn't permit them he has something else he is directing them and what Paul gets his vision of the man of Macedonia, verse 11. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrassi, if that's how you say it.

And the next day we came to Neapolis and from there to Philippi. Okay, so they rined up in Philippi a colony for most part of Macedonia. We're staying in that city for some days. So now they have arrived at Philippi.

Now, Philippi is a main city and as you study through Acts, you can see that Paul, his pattern was to go to the big cities. He would go to these big areas, establish a church in a big city, and in that church would branch out. That's the normal New Testament penitentiary goes. Not how the Lord always works, but that's how he was working here.

And so he gets to Philippi and they go, verse 13, the Sabbath day they go out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made and we sat down and spoke to women who met there. Now Paul's normal pattern was to go to a synagogue. He would go to a big city and go to a synagogue. But there's no synagogue in Philippi.

And we know that because a synagogue, they go by the river. There's no synagogue. A synagogue required to have a quorum that is 10 men. And there weren't 10 men evidently that were Jews in the city there in Philippi.

And so they went out, they're going to find somebody. So they go out by the river and they meet up with these ladies and they're praying. one of them is named Lydia. So verse 14, a certain woman named Lydia heard us.

She was a cellar purple from the city of Thyatira who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house. And so she persuaded us.

So Paul, Lydia comes to faith in Christ, some other women along with her. They're baptized. They go and they stay with Lydia for a while. She's a wealthy lady.

She's selling purple clothing. That was a purple clothing was expensive. It was a sign of royalty. If you wore purple, you were well off.

And so she's staying and that's how they get there. So that's how they get to this point. And Paul is, he's journeying out into the city and he's proclaiming the gospel and this demon-possessed girl is like it says there, she's following them, verse 17, these men are the servants of the Most High God and they proclaim the way of salvation. She did this for many days.

Okay, so we're up to speed of what's going on here and Paul is greatly annoyed. Okay, interesting how demons see things far more clearly than most, right? And the spiritual realm and Paul is greatly annoyed and I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out over her and the demon came out that very hour. Evidently, Paul doesn't want a demon being his advertising agency.

But when the masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and they dragged them into the marketplace through the authorities, right? They bring them and they say, these men are Jews, they are troubling our city, not to lie. All they're doing is sharing the gospel. It's not troubling the city.

What was being troubled is these people lost their profit potential. That was troubling to them and that's usually troubling to most. somebody moves in and removes your means of business, but what was it? Exploitation and taking advantage.

Anyways, they trouble and they teach customs which are not lawful for us being Romans to receive or to receive. So they rise up together, the magic of change, they tear off their clothes, they command them to be beaten with rods and they lay many stripes and so forth and so on. So Paul and Silas, how do they get here? How do they get to this point where they have to go through this?

They're being beaten. Imagine a mob of people grab ahold of you, drag you, strip you, pull out rods, and just start wailing on you. Imagine. Okay, so question.

Why, why does this happen? Were they not following the Lord's direction? Were they, were they not right in the center of God's will? Yes, they absolutely were.

So what, where are they? They get beaten with rods, many strikes, they throw them in the prison, command, keep these guys secure with that charge. The jailer locks and fastens in the stocks. Now the way that they were locked, you see these pictures of people in the stocks and their heads in the thing and right and that's not it.

Okay, they're stretched out, their arms and their legs are stretched out, almost suspended by the shackles. This isn't like our modern, some of our modern prisons, right? They don't get three square and, you know, and all these amenities, it's nothing like that. This is after being beaten.

They're naked, they're beaten. Could God have delivered them? Yeah. He didn't.

How come? Why didn't He do it? Here's the thing. can see in this passage that this is the Lord's direction.

This was the Lord's purpose. And dare I say this for Paul and Silas was the Lord's will that they go through this difficulty. led them to this challenge. It was his hand.

His hand. We have to notice that. This isn't just circumstance. This isn't just happening.

This isn't just something happening outside of the Lord's control. It's not. It was specific. It was purposeful.

It was what God had designed for them. And he chooses to not deliver them. Now, well, let's read on. But at midnight, verse 25, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were open, and everyone's chains were loosed. The keeper of the prison, awakening from sleep, seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself. But when Paul called with a loud voice saying, do yourself no harm, for we are all here, then he called for a lie, ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them down and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And so they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to themselves. God does deliver. And we can see here that there are times, now apologizes have no idea that this is going to happen.

Okay, let's just get that out there. They're just, what are they doing? They're singing. They're praying.

It's a tremendous example for us. It's much like Peter and when he's imprisoned in Acts chapter 12. You guys remember that story, right? Peter, James and John the Inner Circle, God in his wisdom determines that he is going to have James beheaded.

Now why James? And why not Peter? And what how you guys remember the story in chapter 12 of the same thing, right? They're praying for Peter, and Peter's asleep, chained between two guards because he's up for execution in the morning.

But he's sleeping, he's at perfect rest. And you guys remember when the angel comes in and delivers and so forth and he gets up and he goes out and thinks he's seeing a vision and then turns out no it's not this is real and goes to the prayer meeting where they're praying for his deliverance and knocks on the door and they're all shocked when he shows up right and it reminds me of you know my my prayer is often I pray for things and the Lord actually does it and I'm like whoa can't believe he actually you know but that was them and we're no different and and but what What? Why did the Lord deliver Peter and not James? Presumably the church was praying for James or obviously no, the church just wasn't praying for James.

That's what happened. They were only going to pray for Peter and they didn't mind whatever happened to James. They weren't doing that. But the Lord in His wisdom decided to deliver Peter and decided to not deliver James and here God in his wisdom brought Paul and Silas to trial and he eventually delivers them from this trial but what's the lesson for us?

Very often God will deliver us from some harm, but He doesn't deliver us from all harm. And often we pray, right, and we're seeking the Lord and we're desiring for Him. They were praying, but here they are in the stocks. I mean, you read on in the story here in Acts 16, Paul and Silas could have pulled They said, hey, we're Roman citizens and you guys are it's unlawful for you to do this to us before it all happened But he didn't do that That's a separate thing, but for our purposes this morning When God rest use us from harm that that brings him glory Of course or pain or sickness or trial hardship When he doesn't rescue us from the harm, that doesn't mean his care is ended.

Both of those are God's care for us. We have to see that God is in complete control here and he is doing something. He is accomplishing something in the difficulty. He is accomplishing something in the trial, in the suffering.

Now of course we know that there are many reasons for suffering and some suffering is a direct result of our bad choices. But some suffering, as in this example and in the one with Peter, is because we are right in the middle of His will. We automatically think, oh, something's bad. It's because I did something wrong or if something bad happens, it's because I needed to pray more or something.

You know, this can't be God's will for me. Well, I mean, Scripture doesn't give us that example really anywhere. It shows that there are times that the Lord very specifically with intention and with purpose, brings us to the challenges that at times blinds us and other times we can just kind of see them come in, right? So what is he doing?

Go with me. You're in Acts. Go with me to Romans. Romans chapter 5.

Next book over chapter 5. What is He doing? Let's go with verse 1. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also.

We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We are justified by faith. We have peace. We have joy.

We have access. We have grace. We understand that. Look at verse 3, we glory in it says.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God in verse 2, really that's a kind of play on Greek word. We glory in His glory is really what that says. But verse 3, not only that, but we also glory in tribulation. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

I don't know about you, but you know Paul and Silas, they're singing, they're glory in their tribulation. I was talking to somebody yesterday. I'm a wimp. My wife right now is, she's ill and it's been protracted.

It's been a long season and we're praying through it. We're moving through it. And, you know, I have always admired her because she has such a high pain tolerance. This is a physical thing.

She has a tremendously high pain tolerance. I mean, this was before, you know, the birth of our four children. You know, I saw this. It's like, wow, I can't believe it.

Paul, we glory in tribulation. No, why will we glory in tribulation? Because we know. We know what?

We know that tribulation produces perseverance. What is the Lord doing? He is producing perseverance, that Greek word, your translation might say endurance. It might say patience.

The word means a steadfastness, a rock solidness, if you will. There's an endurance that is necessary for our spiritual growth and development to be developed. It has to happen in our lives. And unfortunately the only way that it happens is through tribulation.

And this perseverance produces character. There's a progress here. You see this? The tribulation produces endurance, a perseverance, and the perseverance produces character, and character produces hope.

So we see kind of a clue here for some of the purpose of the trials. The trials will produce in us a perseverance. But the trial also produces a different set of desires, much like I was describing earlier. You have a different set of desires.

But then the Lord weans us. He weans us through trial from those desires that the old nature and its fallenness and those desires. And we have a new desire and the new desire of course is for those things eternal. He brings the tribulation, He brings the suffering, He brings the hardship into our lives so that He can develop these things in us to wean us from in this world and then that produces hope.

So what is he doing? Well what he's doing is he's refining. The Lord allows suffering to come into our lives so that we can be refined. Look at your enrolments.

Go skip over to 2 Corinthians, okay? Just go 2 Corinthians Chapter 1, a couple of books over. Second reading of Chapter 1, Paul talks about this very thing, this very issue of reliance. Look at verse 8, Chapter 1, verse 8.

We don't want you to be ignorant brethren of our trouble, our trouble that came to us in Asia, that we were burdened be unmeasured above strength so that we despaired even of life. Something happened to Paul, and we're not sure exactly what. It could have been a number of things. He despaired of life.

You know what that means? What that literally means is it's over. This is it. We're not surviving this.

So whatever it was, this is as far as the Lord is going to bring us and it's all over. The pressure that he's talking about here. Trouble. Whatever that trouble, whatever the face of that trouble, the tribulation there is the Greek word.

We had the sentence of death in ourselves. Why? That's a purpose clause. We had the sentence the depth so that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the depth.

So God allows the suffering to come into our lives so that we can be refined in order to teach us to depend on Him and not on ourselves. And then these are our words. You have reliance, you have refinement. Let's skip over.

Go to chapter 4. Second Corinthians. There's another R word here. Look at verse 16.

It says, Therefore we don't lose heart even though the outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. The outward man is perishing. for some of us, that's more evident than for others, right? Others of us, right?

I would read this verse as a young man and go, outward man, what are you talking about? Outward man perishing. And now, you know, things, you know, you just, your outward man is falling apart, right? I had a dear friend in Morgantown, I consider him my, my, my, my Morgantown father.

When he ultimately passed and he suffered and he had some debilitating, really was some sicknesses, a couple of things that ended up, that was what the Lord used to call home. And as he was going through that, it was really challenging. It was really difficult and he would say, my body has just fallen to pieces. And I said, it's because the Lord is putting His finishing touches on you.

He would say, why doesn't He just take me? How much longer is this going to be? Because the Lord is not done. He knows exactly in quantity and in duration what we need precisely.

And it's not a moment too long or a moment too short. And I said, oh, he's doing this. He's putting his finishing touches on your character. He's refining you in one day soon it'll be complete and it was I ended up doing his funeral as it happened and I was really think but but we look to he says look our outward man is perishing and the inward man is is being renewed day by day look at verse for our light affliction, which is but for a moment.

I always pause there. Okay. Affliction, most of the time, does not seem very light and it doesn't seem very momentary. Much of the time, it's really heavy and it is far too long.

But our light of fiction, which is but for a moment, what's it doing? What's he doing with it? He says right here, it is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There is something that the Lord is doing that's eternal in the suffering, in the not delivering in the leading us in the midst of the trial until he's developing and he's refining and he's producing and he is conforming us to the image of his son.

There's a reward. That's the R. It's working for us this eternal weight of glory. While we don't look at the things which are seen but we look at the things that are not seen.

That's what I would say to my Morgantown dad. Keep your eyes on the prize. Look up. It's not far.

We don't look at the things that are seen. We look at the things that are not seen because the things that are seen are temporary. That which we are going to right now is temporary. It will end, but that which we don't see with our physicalized, but we see with our spiritual side, that's eternal.

And therein is the hope. You see, we wait, right? We wait. And what it does is it heightens in us this desire for the eternal, this desire for heaven.

It weans us from the trappings of this world and it keeps us more and more. It has a process of just separating us from that which is temporal and really learning to cherish and to treasure that which is eternal. But we wait, right? But while we're waiting, okay, to quote a modern poet, right, the waiting is the hardest part, right, you guys might, okay, every day is one more yard and you take it on faith and you take it to the, the waiting is the hardest part.

It's hard. But while we're waiting, see, in the waiting, the Lord is working. And very often it's the waiting, more so than anything, that we don't see his hand that he is doing his best work. Waiting on God, it's never wasted time.

Because in those times, in those quiet seasons, when we don't see his hand, we don't see what he's doing, see what we don't understand. What he's doing is he is strengthening our faith. He is aligning our heart and aligning our desires with his will. He's weaning us like this and he's refining us, and he's preparing us to receive what we would not have been able to handle before.

These are the eyes of faith. This is what, this is his purpose, this is his will. See, God is glorified often when six saints get better, right? But often he's more glorified when six saints suffer well.

He's even more glorified when six saints die well. A dear friend back in San Diego, she went through, she got breast cancer and it was rough. It was rough. I watched her.

She was faithful. Just as godly. They did dear friends. Godly lady, godly family.

Her husband and I were really close. But I watched her. I watched her go through it. And she suffered well.

She would come to church and she lost all her hair, the whole deal, right? Lost a lot of weight and all this. And smile. Always had a smile.

Always. You could tell she was in tremendous pain, but a smile, looking to the Lord, trusting in the Lord, suffering well. What's he doing? One last verse, I promise this is our last verse, go to 1 Peter chapter,

let's go to Peter chapter 5.

First Peter chapter 5, we'll look at verse 10 and then we'll close. It He says, but may the God of all grace who called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. This is Paul's, Paul's. This is Peter's benediction, as it were.

So, that light affliction that is but for a moment, I don't know, I know Micah and Michele. But I don't know most of you, and I don't know where you are, and I don't know what the Lord, what other circumstances of your life, but I do know this. I know that the God of all grace has called you to His eternal glory. And I know that wherever you find yourself right now, His purpose is in the midst of all of this, He is perfecting that which concerns you.

He is strengthening that which is in you and he is going to establish the work he began in you and he will settle all of the faith that he is developing in you. In my Bible I have that underlined that word, after, and how long is that? I don't know, I don't know, but what I do know is that it was the one who does know, and we can keep our eyes on the one who does know. How does that old hymn go?

reminded me with leaning on the everlasting arms of what's that what is that okay yeah yeah yeah many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand but I know thank you yes I know who holds tomorrow and I know who holds my Hang in there, church. Hang in there. God is faithful. His hands never leave the clay.

He will complete and He will perfect that which concerns you. Please stand. Let's pray. Father, we thank you.

We thank you for your word. Lord, these things that we look at, We know these things in our minds, and Lord, we need to learn these things in our experience. We pray, Lord, that you would continue to remind us of these things, Lord, so that in the reminding of these things, Lord, these are the things that we will never forget. Lord, we look to You, our eyes are on You, our hope is only in You, and Lord, we trust You.

And we pray, Lord, just as we read, Lord, perfect that which concerns us, complete, strengthen and establish. Lord, I lift up this fellowship, I lift up the work that You're doing here, and I pray, Lord, that You will take and that You will make and that You will expand and that You will establish, Lord, and the work of Your kingdom here, Lord, would be ever expanding. We pray collectively, Lord, let Your kingdom come and let Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven and so Lord we look to you and we trust in you and Lord we we just reaffirm to you Lord our eyes are on you and on you alone Lord you are our only hope so we lift these things up to you we pray in Jesus name amen God bless you guys.