

Seeking a Severe Savior

Favorite Psalms Part 32

Psalm 42-43 pt.3 12-13-2015

Summary: He can't consider this suffering pure joy because he is distant from the presence of God. Complaining about not enough nearness to God is the one righteous form of complaint. To recover from darkness, be guided by the Word (Elijah encountered God not in the spectacular miracles, but in His voice). An example of how your conception of God affects day-to-day life: believing in both God's sovereignty and His love. See all your suffering through those two lenses (this came from God and it's good).

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Psalm 42 For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah. 1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and 6 my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. 7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. 8 By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me— a prayer to the God of my life. 9 I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" 10 My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior (the salvation of my face) and my God.

Psalm 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men. 2 You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? 3 Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. 4 Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Introduction

Review

Does anyone remember that song “Deep Calling Deep” by Margaret Becker? I used to love that song (at least the first 20 seconds – the rest of it was kind of boring musically). It is a whole song based on Psalm 42. And the chorus and the title came from verse 7. Today is our third week studying through Psalms 42-43, but so far I haven’t talked yet about this statement in 42:7.

Psalm 42:7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls.

This is what happens when you listen to a contemporary Christian song before actually studying the passage. It turns out the only part of the song I liked was the part that was a misinterpretation of Scripture. She took that phrase **deep calls to deep** to mean something deep down in her soul was calling out to the depths of God’s grace and truth. That concept is not a bad summary of the rest of the psalm, so it’s still a good song, but I don’t think that is what this particular phrase means. Look at the immediate context.

42:7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.

In the ancient Jewish mind, the word *deep* was a very foreboding, scary word. The Jews were not a sea-going people, and so they thought of the ocean as a place that was utterly inhospitable to man. It was a place of danger and chaos and darkness and death, and so that word is very often used in contexts of judgment, or to describe the severity of God in dealing with men. That word is what developed into the New Testament concept of the abyss. And so the idea of the depths of the abyss calling out to even deeper, darker reaches of the abyss, coupled with the idea of waves and breakers and waterfalls crashing down and sweeping over him – those are all images that the psalmist is using to describe the magnitude of his dark, miserable, terrifying, hopeless situation in the strongest terms he can come up with. Our man here is deeply depressed.

“If he’s such a godly man, why doesn’t he just consider it pure joy, knowing that the testing of his faith produces perseverance?”

Scripture has so much to say about rejoicing in times of suffering – why doesn’t this guy just do that – realize the spiritual value of suffering and count it all joy?

Here’s why: He could do that if it were only hardships. If it were just a matter of painful circumstances, he could have joy in his suffering. But that can’t happen here, because not only is this guy suffering, but he is distanced from the presence of God. If he had the presence of God nearby to give him joy and strength and peace, then yeah, he could rejoice through this suffering. But he is having to go through this suffering without that, and that is unbearable, and so he is striving with everything in him to find the presence of God.

Godly Complaining

So he pours out his soul to God with a prayer that is actually a lament - a complaint.

“I thought complaining was forbidden in Scripture? I thought the church was to be a grumble free zone in a complaining world?”

It is. Most complaining is strictly forbidden in Scripture because it dishonors God. But there is one kind of complaining that is allowed. There is one kind of complaining that actually glorifies God and pleases God, and so He allows us to do that kind. The one and only thing that we are allowed to complain about in this life is ... not enough closeness to God’s presence. If you don’t have enough nearness to God, enough grace from God, enough of His face turning towards you – and so you cry out to Him to give you those things – that glorifies Him because it shows Him to be the supreme treasure of life.

That is what this guy is doing, so God took his prayer and put it in the Bible as an example for us to show us how to find the way out of the darkness of depression and discouragement back to joy. And it really does teach us a lot. I have grouped the various principles under three main headings, just to help us remember them. The way to find joy again when your soul is downcast is to do three things:

PEP - Pray for help, Enjoy the presence of God, Preach to your soul.

The first one he teaches by example, because that is what this psalm is – a prayer. He calls it that in 42:8 – **a prayer to the God of my life**. And it is a fervent, passionate, urgent, heartfelt prayer.

42:4 These things I remember as I pour out my soul

That is the first P in PEP – pray. The E stands for Enjoy God’s Presence. That one is the most prominent theme of his prayer, and so we are spending more of our time on that point. How do you enjoy God’s presence?

Get Thirsty (42:2)

First get thirsty (v.2). Work up an appetite for God by interpreting the anxieties and sorrows of your soul as cravings for Him.

Go to the Altar (43:4)

When you are hungry and thirsty enough, you will start seeking God, and that begins at the altar (43:4). Deal with your sin through repentance and trust in the work of Christ on the cross. Preach the gospel to yourself over and over.

Be Guided by the Word (43:3)

Next, immerse yourself in the light and truth that God has sent forth in His Word (43:3).

Elijah

Remember a few weeks back when we were talking about Elijah’s depression, when he went off by himself and asked God to take his life? What did God do to bring Elijah out of that dark time?

1 Kings 19:4 ... “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life... 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” 8 So he got up and ate and drank.

That was God’s solution? Food and rest? Absolutely. There is a very strong connection between the body and the soul, and when your body is weak it’s a whole lot harder for your soul to fight for joy. If you are struggling emotionally, try getting eight hours of sleep per night and eat a healthy diet. It is amazing how much more strength you have spiritually when you just do that. If you are depressed, go to a medical doctor and find out if there is some physical illness.

So yes, the first step was to restore Elijah’s strength physically with some good rest and nourishment and refreshment. But that is not the only thing God did. One of the dangers in our culture is they want to reduce everything down to only physical problems. They think joy or lack of joy is mainly a matter of chemicals in the brain. And what they fail to realize is that just as your body can have an effect on your emotions, it goes the other way too – your emotions, and spiritual realities, can have an effect on your body. Bad thoughts can produce bad chemicals, and right thoughts about God can reverse chemical problems in the brain. Depression is not just something that happens in your brain or your body – it also

happens in your spirit. So even if there are some physical factors that got you into depression, there are some spiritual things you can do to lift yourself back out. Joy in God can help pull you out of even a physically-induced depression.

So look what God does next. After getting Elijah rested up and hydrated and nourished God tells him to travel another 200 miles out of the country to Mt. Horeb. That's another name for Mt. Sinai, where Moses encountered the presence of God and received the Word of God.

1 Kings 19:11 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

What is the point of all that? Let's go back to why Elijah was depressed. Even after the amazing, spectacular displays of divine power by sending the drought, then sending fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice and the altar on Mt. Carmel in the showdown with Baal – even all that had no impact on the king and queen. They still reject Yahweh, to the point of wanting to kill Yahweh's prophet. So it seems like Elijah's work is futile. So what does God do? He brings fire, and wind and an earthquake in all these huge, spectacular, miraculous displays. And Elijah does not encounter God in those miracles. Where does he encounter God? The HCSB translation gives the most literal rendering of verse 12.

1 Kings 19:12 ...And after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper.

The word *voice* comes first, which means that is where the emphasis is. The point isn't so much that when God speaks He is quiet rather than loud. The point is that if you want to encounter God, it is not going to happen through His miracles. It is going to happen through His Word. The most profound encounter you can ever have with the presence of God is going to come through His voice.

Yeah Elijah, the fire from heaven burning up the altar, that didn't reach their hearts. But there is something much more powerful than miracles, namely, God's voice. If hearts are going to change, that is how it's going to happen. And Jesus verified that too, didn't He? You don't see a whole lot of hearts being won over through His miracles. People were amazed at His miracles, but their hearts were won over by His words. The writer of Psalm 43 understood that. Instead of asking God to send a bunch of signs and wonders, he asks for light and truth to guide him into God's presence.

All that to say when you are depressed, strive to encounter God in the Scriptures. I realize that's a whole lot easier said than done when you're down. Depression takes away your motivation. I remember a time in my life when I was so broken and in so much emotional pain that I was lying on my bed face down, soaking my bed with tears, and my Bible was there on the bed – within arm's reach – and I felt like I didn't have the strength to even reach my hand over and flop it open. It was a major battle that went on quite a while before I was finally able to just reach over and open it up. By God's grace it happened to open to Job 38, and that chapter was exactly what I needed to find my way into God's presence at that moment. And before long I was back on my feet. So I know – it's not easy to get into the Scriptures when you feel this way.

I counseled one woman who was probably the most depressed person I have ever counseled. She could barely even walk, and she would lay her head down on the table the whole time we were meeting – she was almost catatonic. There was no way she was going to open up a Bible or anything else and read, so I got a cheap MP3 player at Walmart and loaded it full of Scriptures, encouraging, uplifting sermons, and an audiobook by Joni Erickson Tada about suffering. And I said, "When you wake up in the morning, if you can just manage to reach over and stick the earbud in your ear and hit play, then you can just lie there and listen." And she did that, and within a few of weeks she had completely recovered from her depression.

All that to say I know it's hard, but it is essential. You have to find your way into that place where God's smile can melt away the icicles hanging all over your heart – you have to find that place, and the

only GPS that can get you there is the Word of God. Those icicles will melt when you get close to Him and have fellowship with Him. And when I talk about getting close to God or experiencing His presence, don't think I'm talking about some weird, mystical, religious experience. Experiencing God's presence can happen all day every day in ordinary situations as you interpret those situations through the lens of the truth about God.

Walk with God

When you look through those lenses, everything you do all day long turns into little acts of fellowship with God. So you do your work, and you experience His presence by looking at your work through the lens of the truth of Scripture. You are a tool in the hand of God, being used to carry out His purposes in this world. In your role in your family – as a brother or sister or mom or dad or son or daughter – you are a tool in God's hand that He is using to do what He wants done. God has put His hand on your shoulder and said, "This task I'm entrusting to you in this moment. Do this for Me." When you see it that way, and you are alert to the fact that that is what is happening, and you have a moment of enjoying the feeling of being in God's hand as His tool in that moment, you are experiencing the presence of God. There are so many different ways you can do that all through the day. You have communion with God – experience His presence –

- by being enlightened by Him, as you submissively learn at His feet,
- by being listened to by Him, as you lift your hands to Him in prayer as a child in His lap,
- by being sheltered and protected by Him, as you run into His refuge,
- by being provided for by Him, as you take a seat at His bountiful table,
- by being strengthened by Him as you feel His power through your trials when He takes you by the hand,
- by being thrilled by His glory, kneeling before His throne in praise,
- by being used by Him, as a tool in His hand or as a fountainhead through which His grace flows to others,
- by being close to Him, as you walk by His side by having the same affections and desires and loves that He has,
- by being chastised by Him as you walk with Him to the woodshed,
- by being healed and restored by Him as you lie on His operating table,
- by being sanctified and made holy by Him as you are shaped on His potter's wheel,
- and by suffering with our Lord Jesus, as you take up your cross.

So many ways to draw near to God's presence, and most of it simply boils down to being aware of what He is doing and enjoying it. Look at every detail of life through the lens of what Scripture says about God.

So much of the solution to the problem of discouragement or depression is to simply look upward instead of downward. Three times he says, **Why are you downcast, O my soul?** Depression is both a result and a cause of a downward gaze. You start looking only at this world, and you stop looking up at God. And the solution is to start looking back up toward God again.

Why are you downcast O my soul? ... Put your hope in God.

Look up! Get your eyes back on Him. If the problem is being downcast, the solution is to be upcast. Now I know at first that sounds like a shallow cliché.

"Oh, you're depressed? Just look up!"

That would be a shallow cliché if someone said it and all they meant was to start thinking happy thoughts instead of sad ones. But this goes much deeper than that. Scripture teaches that the gaze of the soul upon God has a transforming effect. It changes you. And failure to do it will kill you.

Sovereignty and Love

Now, I did the best I could last week to make the point that your conception of God will determine the trajectory of your life, and can push you down into discouragement or lift you up into joy. That is a statement that sounds great in a religious setting, but when it comes to the practical, nuts and bolts of living day-to-day life, it doesn't really seem to be true. If someone has this list of beliefs about God or that list of beliefs about God – how is that going to make any real difference in real life situations, like someone in your house keeps making a mess and expecting you to clean it up, or someone makes fun of you at school, or your spouse keeps spending money you don't have, or you keep forgetting important things?

Most people think your beliefs about God are simply matters of opinion, and they have no more impact on the important matters of daily life than your opinions about the teachings of Aristotle or Plato. So let me take just two attributes of God and I'll show you how your conception of those two attributes has an impact on every moment of your life.

Your understanding of these two attributes of God will determine how you react to all the hardships of life. And I will show you that in this psalm. Imagine someone reading this psalm who has never heard of God. The psalmist describes these horrible circumstances in his life that are causing him so much pain, and he calls them *God's* waves and breakers and waterfalls. He sees all this suffering as coming from God. And yet, the deepest longing of his heart is to draw near to this God who is sending all this calamity into his life. He longs to meet with the one who is hurting him. How do you explain that? Has this guy lost his mind? If God is sending the pain, how is the solution nearness to God?

He hasn't lost his mind, and his words make perfect sense if you understand these two crucial truths about God:

- 1) **God is sovereign**
- 2) **God is good**

Very often the reason we get depressed is because of wrong responses to suffering. And almost all wrong responses to suffering are due to getting confused on one of those two points. Let's take a look at how this psalmist thought about those two points.

The Sovereignty of God

Sometimes people come up with doctrines that say God has nothing to do with the hardships that come our way. They want to protect God from looking bad, or they can't stand the thought that this excruciating, horrible thing that has happened to them could have possibly come from the hand of God, so they come up with a theology that says it is just out of God's hands. They think, *There's no way that God could be both loving and be the one behind this. And I know God is loving, therefore He must not be the one who sent this trouble.* When you draw that conclusion, you have just made all the suffering in your life completely meaningless. If you think God just takes His hands off and says, "I'm just going to let evil people do whatever they want with their free will," then all the terrible things that happen to you are just meaningless, purposeless events. If your child gets killed by a drunk driver, it's meaningless – he died for nothing. Romans 8:28 doesn't apply in that situation because it involved someone else's free will. And since almost everything that happens to you in life involves some sinful person's free will, then almost your entire life is completely meaningless.

But that is not what Scripture teaches. And it is certainly not what this guy believed. He knew what the ultimate source of his suffering was.

43:7 Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.

What was happening to him? He was being oppressed and treated unjustly by deceitful and wicked men. Bad people were doing bad things to him, and he interpreted that as the waves and breakers and the

roaring waterfalls *of God*. These devastating waves crashing over his head one right after another were God's waves and breakers.

How can that be? If God is never the author of evil, then how can I say that He is the one who is behind this sinful thing that is being done to me? That's a mystery. But the fact that it is hard to understand does not make it any less true. God doesn't cause the evil, but He is the one who decides whether that sinful action will be allowed to happen, and whether it will be allowed to touch your life. God can prevent anything, and He often does prevent evil people from doing evil things. But other times He lets it happen, and when He does, it is accurate to say that thing came from God. When all those horrible things happened to Job, he said:

Job 1:21 ...The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away

“Wasn't it Satan who took all those things from him?”

Yes, it was, but it was God who gave Satan the green light. So God and Satan were both behind it, and what God was doing mattered more to Job than what Satan was doing.

Job 2:10 ...Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

Both good and trouble come from God.

Job 42:11 ... They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon him

There you have the narrator of the book, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, affirming that the trouble did indeed come from the Lord.

Lamentations 3:38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?

Amos 3:6 ...When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?

Ecclesiastes 7:14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other.

1 Samuel 2:6 The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.

Isaiah 45:7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

“Maybe that's true with natural disasters, but what about when it involves human beings and free will – people committing sins against me?”

When Joseph's brothers committed the sin of selling him into slavery, he said:

Genesis 50:20 You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good

God intended it. Even the most wicked sin that was ever committed – the murder of the Son of God:

Acts 4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Do I need to keep going? I could. The assumption that God is sovereign over absolutely everything that happens, good and bad, permeates every chapter of the Bible. We need to know this fact about God down at the controlling level – like our belief in gravity. Just automatically assume in your heart that every single thing that happens came from God. Look at life through that lens.

The Kindness/Goodness of God

The other truth about God that we need to know deep down at the controlling level is the kindness and goodness of God. Natural, human reasoning cannot figure out how God could be both sovereign and good if there is evil in the world. They can't figure out how they could both be true so they latch onto one

and reject the other. Some people say, “God can’t be both sovereign and loving. And I know He is loving, therefore He can’t be in control of these horrible things that are happening to me.” But as we just saw, that doesn’t work biblically.

There are other people who take it in the other direction. They say, “I KNOW God is sovereign. I know this trouble in my life is from Him. And I don’t see how that can be compatible with God loving me; therefore He isn’t loving toward me in this instance.” These people figure that God is carrying out His program, and so whenever His program conflicts with their best interests, His program wins and they lose. God does whatever is best for His own glory, but He doesn’t always do what’s best for me. I can’t run to Him as a shelter, because sheltering me might not fit with His agenda in a particular instance.

These people have an attitude about God that He is not really for them. Maybe it’s because of their theories about His sovereignty, or maybe it’s because they feel like God is irritated at them all the time because of all their sin, but for one reason or another they don’t really think of God as being for them. He might be against them, He might just be indifferent about them, but not for them.

But the psalmist didn’t think that way at all. Remember last week we looked at all the “my’s” in this prayer? My Savior, my God, the God of my life, God my rock, God my stronghold, God the gladness of my rejoicing. He knew that God was for him and not against him.

One verse that really stands out in these two psalms is 42:8. Throughout the whole prayer he goes back and forth from speaking to God about himself to speaking to himself about God. Four times he speaks to God about himself, and three times he speaks to himself about God. But there is one verse that is unique – verse 8. That one stands out because that is the one verse where, instead of talking to God about himself or talking to himself about God, he stops and speaks to us about God. It is different from all the other statements in the psalm. He interrupts his praying to God and preaching to self, and turns to us, and looks us in the eye and makes this declarative statement about the nature of God.

42:8 By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me

The word translated **directs** means *to command*. God *commands* His love. That word is often used in the sense of commissioning - sending someone to do a particular task. Like if you had a subordinate at work and you sent him somewhere with orders to complete a particular task for you. God does that with His love. He says to His love, “Do you see my child down there, starting to drown in the abyss under the waves and breakers I sent into her life? I want you to go down there, and wrap yourself around her, and let her feel My affection and My approval. Your job is to go down and protect her and put some joy in her heart. Go! Do it now.” That is what God is like – He commissions His love to wrap its arms around me. Like Psalm 23:6 - **Surely [His] goodness and love will follow me (pursue me, hunt me down) all the days of my life.** God sends His love. He does that **by day**, and **at night his song is with me**. Earlier he said his tears are running day and night, but he knows God’s love is also coming at him day and night. These lines are parallel, so **his song is with me** is another way of saying **he sends his love**. God loves me in such a way as to give me a reason to sing. The main purpose of singing is to express the joy that is in your heart. So the idea is that God loves me in such a way as to give me a reason to sing. Did anybody here ever have your mom or dad tell you when you were a kid, “Stop crying or I’ll give you something to cry about”? I like God’s approach better. He says, “Stop crying ... because I’m about to give you something to sing about.”

So this declarative statement about what God is like in verse 8 stands right in the center of the prayer. It is like he is driving a stake in the ground that rules over everything else in the prayer. Yes, the trouble comes from God’s hand, but that trouble will never, ever be allowed to be in conflict with God’s love for you. He has not promised that for unbelievers, but He has promised that for us.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him

He works everything for our greatest good.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

If God could say that to the Old Testament covenant community, how much more would it apply to His sons and daughters who are in Christ? God's plans and designs for you are not to harm you, but to benefit you.

So why does this guy want to meet with the God who is sending all these horrific hardships his way? Because he knows, deep, deep, down inside, that God loves him and is for him. So in his mind, the *only* solution to his problems is the presence of God. The only cure he sees for his depression is hope in God – the God who is both sovereign and loving. He looked at all his suffering through those two lenses. It is essential that we do that because as soon as one of them starts to slip, you'll get in trouble.

Psalm 62:11 One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, 12 and that you, O Lord, are loving.

Cling to both. Someone makes a mess and expects you to clean it up, that's from God. Your spouse snaps at you or makes a belittling remark, that's from God. Your desk is such a mess due to poor discipline that you lose some important papers, that's from God. You get the flu, that's God. Flat tire – God. Mold in your bathroom – God. Bad news from the IRS – from God.

It all comes from God, and it all comes from a God who does nothing but loving things towards you, for your good – never to harm you. The letter from the IRS – the only reason it came is because God decided it would be good for you at this time. Mold in your bathroom, flat tire, the flu – all gracious gifts sent by loving God to benefit you. That cutting remark from a coworker, the kids at school laughing at you – every one of those trials is crafted very carefully according to exact, divine specs to bring into your life exactly what is needed to build your faith and accomplish all kinds of marvelous things that God wants to do in your life. If the devil tries to bring some kind of hardship into your life that doesn't meet those specs, God won't allow it. It is all ultimately from God, and it is all love. It is all for your good.

Last week Harry was severely ill – ended up in the hospital with a very painful sickness. And he posted on Facebook a whole list of ways this could be God saying, "I love you." How can he do that? Because he was looking at his illness through these lenses. He was looking up instead of down.

When painful things happen to you, and you don't look at those painful things through these two lenses, your emotions take a pounding. And when you suffer again they take another pounding. And before long you will get pounded down into a downcast state and your joy will be gone. Then what do you do? You look back up to God, and you put the glasses of these truths back on, so that every hardship in life reaffirms His love for you, and you feel His loving hand on your shoulder 100 times a day.

Benediction – Remember the word of encouragement that addresses you as a child of God - Hebrews 12:5 ... "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. ... 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Which lens do you find it hardest to look at your trials through – God's sovereignty (this suffering is from Him), or God's love (even though you can't see how, this is ultimately what is best for you at this moment)?
- 2) Which kinds of trials do you find it easier to see through these lenses, and which kinds are harder?
- 3) If there are some specific passages of Scripture that have guided you into God's presence in a way that brought you joy in a time of sorrow, share them with the group.