



THE WEEKLY FIRST



We all share in a measure of suffering. News of it may come in a phone call, a somber talk with a work supervisor, in the office of a school counselor, or - as it did yesterday - in breaking news of the assassination of Charlie Kirk. We may not know what form it will take but suffering and adversity will come. On the night before Jesus suffered for our salvation, He reminded His First and 21st century disciples of this inevitability. (John 13-17)

Jesus says, *"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) In one verse Jesus teaches a spiritual framework for living in this world. Jesus confronts the **reality**: *"In this world you will have trouble"*. He assures the **future hope**: *"But take heart! I have overcome the world"*. One day there will be no more suffering and death. And Jesus reveals a **gospel promise**: *"in Me you may have peace."*

Trusting in Christ, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, there is the “peace of God.”

On Wednesday night, I discussed six key truths for responding to suffering and adversity. They are as follows.

God is sovereign. The One True God of the Bible is the One who reigns over all. He is in charge. He is the infinitely wise, all-powerful God, who carries out His eternal purposes. *“The plans of the Lord stand forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.”* (Psalm 33:11) This is a hard truth for those experiencing suffering because the question quickly emerges: “Why?” “Why is God allowing such suffering?” Always remember that the sovereign God of the Bible is the suffering God. He chose to personally enter our suffering in Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the gospel.

God redeems evil. God is not the author of evil, but He employs evil in His infinitely wise plan to bring good. Remember what Joseph said to his brothers, *“Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* (Genesis 50:19-20)

God is committed to our good. How is God sovereign, yet our choices meaningful and consequential? In the Bible, the sovereignty of God and human responsibility are compatible. The God of the Bible is not a mechanical god operating as a machine in this world, with human beings as His robots. God is a personal God whose infinitely wise plan accounts for our choices, commitments, prayers, and yes, sins and failures. He promises that in all things He is working for His good, His glory and our good. *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) Mr. Beaver in *The Chronicles of Narnia* says to the children (he is speaking about God), “Of course He is not safe, but He is good.” And He is committed to our good.

Christ declares solidarity with us in our suffering. Sympathy is to see someone in a ditch and feel sorry for them. Empathy is to see someone in the ditch, feel sorry for them, and be compelled to put one foot in the ditch and help them up. Solidarity is getting into the ditch with them. Jesus, the suffering Savior, in His life and death, crawled into our ditches and declared solidarity with us. He is the One – the only One – who can completely identify with us in the depths of our deep, dark ditches. He declares solidarity with us so that we may have a High Priest who identifies with our suffering, sorrow, sickness,

and sin struggles. *“Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:14-16)

God limits the severity of our adversity so that we are not destroyed by it. *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”* (I Corinthians 10:13) It is true that God will not give us more than we can handle. But I would add the spiritual addendum, “in His strength”. Amidst severe adversity we can be undone. In His strength, we will be more than conquerors. We will be able to say with the Apostle Paul, *“We are hard pressed*

Continue to pray for our staff as their family members experience a variety of health struggles. To that end, we ask that you read the bulletin for all of this week's announcements. It is attached. We hope to see you Sunday!

[Sunday Bulletin](#) is Online!



Welcome

Our mission is to know Christ, serve Him,
and make Him known.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION - ACTIVE ELDERS

Raegan Swaringen Sharon Cranford Tony Rary
Cookie Hamilton Chris Lowder Ken Sparks
Sue Maiocchi Phil McLain

Pastor Eddie Spencer, Moderator
Jeff Barnhardt, Session Clerk



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