

The Experience of Every Christian Life - Part 3

Suffering in a Broken World

Luke 13:10-13

Well you know when our kids were young and we would go on our family vacations, we would often stop at the store and buy a brand new jigsaw puzzle, a puzzle that we could do while we were on our trip. We knew our kids were too young to do much of it on their own. I mean they might be able to piece a few of the border pieces together but we would do it as a family, it would be a family project, get to the hotel and we would have this little table there, a kitchen table, and we would put the pieces out on the table and we work on it. And as is with us at least on our vacations, our vacations are usually really busy, a lot of activity and so we wouldn't get a lot of it done. But the kids wouldn't sweat it. They'd realize that as they came to know, even if we only had like 30% of it done by the last night of our vacation, they could trust that Mom and Dad were going to stay up after they went to bed and we would finish it. And then they'd wake up on the morning and then viola it would be all done and we take our little traditional picture around the, you know, hotel table, coffee table there or the kitchen table, take a picture, pose for a picture of the finished product and then we would pack up and then we would go home. (01:38)

Now the funny thing about those puzzles and my children, they would open the puzzle up when we got to the hotel and they would see it in 1000 pieces or whatever it was and they would never break out in tears that it was broken. I mean they realize that's how puzzles come, they're in a bunch of pieces. When they poured it out on the table and they saw this pile and then they look at the box top and here's what it's suppose to look like and here's what it really looked like they weren't disillusioned, I mean they recognize there was a task to be done and there needed to be some assembly and they knew in time they had a confidence it would soon look like the box top. Yeah, there was frustration that they had especially as little kids trying to piece together a thousand piece puzzle but they were confident that what they couldn't do, Mom and Dad could do. They knew that we would get it done and we were much more apt and skilled to put it together so they didn't despair. They knew that soon we would be posing next to a completed picture. (02:43)

You know there is a day coming for Christians that reminds me of that scene. A day when we will pose, if you will, next to a picture, a completed picture, an assembled picture of life as it ought to be. I mean that's the opposite of the definition of sin, life as it ought to be. There's going to be a time when the world is, and everything in it, including you and me and our lives and our bodies and our relationships, human government, all these things are going to be turned over to God and they're going to be assembled in just the way they ought to be. In the words of the Old Testament prophet, every valley is going to be lifted up, every mountain made low, the crooked is going to be made straight and the rough places are going to be made plain, smooth. And then here's the reason then next phrase of that Isaiah 40 quote, because the glory of the LORD will be revealed and all flesh will see it together. That's not just a hope of some return after the Babylonian captivity, this is not some minor occurrence, even if it's a major national occurrence, we're talking about a global occurrence, when all flesh, all created beings will see it. And here's this great confident statement, and I love the last line of that verse, it says the mouth of the LORD has spoken. It's going to happen. (04:01)

You can be confident in this. What's broken – fixed, what's crooked – straight, whatever is rough and not level and plain and smooth – it will be it's going to be. God is going to show up and he's going to fix it and you can be sure of it because the mouth of the LORD has spoken. You have the picture that we live in now is broken. Have you read the news? Things are not as they ought to be, in the world, in the country, in our state, in our county probably not in your home and certainly not in our lives, it's broken. And it's painful and it's frustrating and I recognize that but as Christians we don't lose heart because the mouth of the Lord has spoken and we understand what he says, and we believe what he says. We have confidence in what he says and he's proved that he can do what he has promised. As a matter of fact when we study the gospels we recognize that Jesus assures us of an absolute permanent fix to all things. A eternal restoration of all things, he demonstrates that, he has the ability to create an eternal restoration of all things by demonstrating these temporal restorations of things. And every time we see in the gospels Jesus do something that supersedes the bounds of nature and suspends natural law and does something with a word or in this case a touch in Luke chapter 13, he shows that he can make crooked things straight, rough places plain, every



mountain can be made lower, every valley filled in, what's wrong with the world can be made right. (05:34)

And the promise of God is that will happen when all flesh sees his glory revealed. That is a coming day that we all look forward to. It is the consummation of the ages; it's called the Blessed Hope of the New Testament Christian life. It is something that all of us should be excited about, it's what the early church cried out Maranatha, it's the forward looking confident hope that brings optimism to the present even when things are in pieces now. Yeah, it's frustrating putting some of the pieces back together and God has called us to work at that, but you know we have a confidence that one day we're going to wake up and viola the whole world is going to be fixed. That's not pie in the sky; it's rooted in historic facts like these in Luke chapter 13. If you haven't opened your Bible or called up this gospel yet, I would invite you to do it now and I want you to look at four verses with me in Luke chapter 13, and I admittedly tell you at the outset of reading these four verses that we're going to stop in the middle of this periscope, this scene and we're going to say, "Let's just deal with this." We know where it's going, as you'll see at the following verses in just a second. But I wanted to just contemplate as we're looking at chapter 13 through the lens of every Christian life. Things we're all going to experience. We're all going to experience the call to repentance if we're Christian, we're all going to experience the call to bear fruit as we saw last time, and now we have people that we encounter in this text living in a broken world and in this case a woman in a broken body and we just need to get ourselves situated with the right perspective and the bearing we should have, knowing that when things are broken, everything is right on schedule. When things aren't as they ought to be, we know that that's going to be the allowance for the time being but it's not the way it's always going to be. (07:17)

Verses 10 through 13, now he – that is Christ of course, verse 10 says – was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. That's where you assembled, the Torah said that you got together on the seventh day and you met in the synagogue and you read the Torah, you had people comment on it, and that's what was going on. That's what the obedient people to the Old Testament text were doing. And behold there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. She's in rough shape. It doesn't tell us what it is. Dr. Luke doesn't give us any insight, perhaps he didn't have any, was it muscular, skeletal, I don't know, some kind of arthritis related thing, some kind of - we don't know, scoliosis, something had just radically bent her over. This is not just grandma hunching over a little bit, this is an eighteen year long, two decade almost disabling problem with her body. Verse 12, when Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." Here's a temporal restoration because that same spine that he fixed would end up in a grave not too many years later. It was a fix for the time to demonstrate something about his power, something about his assurance to us and to every other generation of Christians that he will one day with a word, fix the entirety of this cosmos including our lives and this society. So he goes and lays hands on her, verse 13, and immediately with a touch of his hands she was made straight and she glorified God. (08:52)

Now if you glance down you'll see this caused a real stir in the synagogue. The leader of the synagogue, the senior leader got indignant over this that he healed on the Sabbath, and we'll deal with that unjust criticism of Christ next time we get together. And we all experience that too so we'll make that its own lesson, yeah we're all going to experience unjust criticism. But for today, let's just deal with this. As I call it suffering in a broken world. Here is a gal, doing what the Bible told her to do, meeting together to study the Torah in this place doing exactly what she should. Jesus shows up, she's ready to learn from him, and she has to park in the handicapped space at the synagogue because her body is broken. Now this first point that I want you to note on your worksheet if you've pulled it out or you have it electronically off our website, isn't going to make you say, "Wow that's so novel I don't know how he came up with that. What a genius we have as a pastor." Not going to make you say that. As a matter of fact if you've been here a while you may yawn your way through this thinking he's always trying to remind us of this. Well, I just try to teach verse by verse through the Bible so if it comes up a lot, you can know it comes up a lot in the Bible. (09:57)

But I think we need to know it and the reason Jesus seems to repeat this lesson for us so often that we can make this observation so repeatedly in the New Testament text is because there's a big myth that Satan would like to propagate among us in the name of Christ. That if you are a righteous person and you do what God asks you to do, well then you shouldn't be suffering the way you're suffering. Do you think anybody says that these days anymore? I hear it all the time. If instead if being here you decided to sit this morning even in California we still have religious broadcasting you should go back East and see how much they have, it's like all weekend long. They will tell you on station after station after station if you just had enough faith, you shouldn't be suffering. If you just trusted God and prayed these prayers and came to our church or gave this guy some money, if you just did this all right the way God



would want you to do and you live the way you live then you're not going to have the problems you have. I guess all these churches don't have handicapped parking spaces at their churches. If they do they're in the visitors parking section, right? Because if you're devout and you're faithful and you believe what the pastor is preaching up there, well then you're not going to be sick, you certainly won't be unemployed, and you won't be poor, you're going to have all these things. You're going to tell us that's not true, that's exactly what I'm going to say. Number 1 on your outline let's jot it down this way; you should expect the righteous to suffer. (11:17)

1. Expect the Righteous to Suffer

Now that's a big category, suffer. If you've just come back from your annual check-up and you've got some serious problem based on some test that was run on your body and you sit there in the loneliness at night looking at the ceiling in the darkness of your bedroom and say, "God why? I'm as godly in my sanctification as I've ever been, I've really gotten serious about Bible study and prayer life and service, I'm giving to the church, I'm doing what I'm suppose to do. And now I get hit with this?" I just don't want you to be surprised. If you're doing all things the way you ought to do things in your business and you're doing it the way you know God would want you to, you have integrity in your heart and integrity in your dealings with people and now all of a sudden your business is on the verge of collapse or maybe it just did, maybe you got fired. I just don't want you to sit around and go, "That's not suppose to happen." To put it in broad poetic terms if you open up the news page on your browser and you see that our society is broken and then you go into your family and you see that perhaps relationships and issues there are broken and in your work life and in your home life and in the privacy of your personal life you say there are so many things that are broken here and yet I'm doing what God has asked me to do. I'm making progress like I never have before, I just don't want you to go, that's not suppose to happen. (12:41)

It's like my kids didn't look at all the pieces in the box and go now what did we buy here? This is messed up. It supposed to be messed up right now. We don't revel in it, we're going to dump it out on the table and with intelligence and biblical principals we're going to do the best we can to assemble it, but if you can't assemble it all and pieces won't go together you don't despair, you're not disillusioned, you're not alarmed. You recognize that a lot of this isn't going to be fixed until Christ comes back. The righteous will suffer. Turn with me if you would to Job, he's a good example of that isn't he? Job, turn to the book of Job. (13:20)

We often go to the first two chapters but I want to start in chapter 4 today. Job chapter 4. I want to show you that really the reason this book is here is to show us something about the myth that I said is being propagated in the name of God. And it is clearly entrenched in the pages and chapters of this book. And Jesus is demonstrating by his life and Job is living out by his example that you know the righteous do suffer because if anyone suffered, it was Christ and if there's anyone righteous it is Christ. And so this is nothing new, but Job was this big book, 42 chapters in the Old Testament reminding us that we have righteous people that suffer and then all of his friends step in Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad, his three friends show up and they start saying things that you and I think and often still say if not out loud under our breath about things that should be when we look at our lives and we say, "Well it's not how it ought to be." Here's this gal, for 18 years she's been suffering, walking through the door of her synagogue, ready to worship God and serve God and listen to the instruction of God and carry out the instructions of God and at least I'm assuming that she's there on that day to hear from the word, and she's suffering. Chapter 4 do you see if you have an ESV there's a title over that, and I know what it reads over the ESV, Eliphaz speaks colon, then three words summary, what is it? The innocent what? Prosper? Yeah that's a pretty decent summary of what Eliphaz is going to say here. And if you want to invert that I guess we'd say it this way, then the guilty what? Suffer, and if I'm going to diagnose your problem my good friend Job, if you're suffering it must be that you are guilty, because the innocent, well the innocent they prosper. (15:12)

Let's jump in the middle of this in verse number 7, remember helpful Eliphaz says that to Job. Remember who that was innocent ever perished? I mean come on, if you're good and walking with God and in step with God and doing what he asks you to do, I mean who's ever been cut down by God and perished? Where were the upright cut off? Verse 8, as I've seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble, well they reap the same. There's got to be some kind of iniquity in your life, you've got to have some kind of trouble you're stirring up and you're going to get all that trouble back on yourself because you know you reap what you sow. By the breath of God – now this is God, this isn't just happenstance the breath of God – by the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed. You made God mad now, Job figure out what it is. Now we have chapter after chapter after chapter, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar saying, "Hey, there's sin in your life Job." Now turn back to the first chapter with me. We

know that's not the case. We know that's not the case. Verse 8, I mean we could take the prescript of this and read the same words but let's just read it from the dialog coming out of God's mouth himself in verse number 8. The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered by servant Job - Job 1:8 - that there is none like him on earth?" I mean he's on the top of the org chart when it comes to righteousness, he's a blameless man, an upright man, he fears God and he turns away from evil. Now read that again. Consider Job, none like him on earth, blameless and upright, fears God, turns away from evil. I want you to think about that for a second. Those are phrases we find of people like Noah, Daniel, Elijah, in this case Job, David. If you ask now, are those people absolutely blameless? Absolutely upright, always fearing God in every decision, always turning away from evil? The answer is going to be for every one of those biblical characters I named, you're going to say, no. So we know what ever God is talking about here, he is talking about in a relative sense and he already started with a relative phrase this, there's none like him on earth. You take all the people of earth, and we know this, categorically about all people on earth, there is none righteous no not one, not a single person. So you want to talk in an absolute terms, then we understand no one is righteous. But if you want to talk in relative terms there are people that are more righteous. Daniel is more righteous than some of his colleagues that got torn down in the Babylonian captivity and killed in Jerusalem. We know that Noah is more righteous than a lot of people that drowned in the flood. We understand these things. David, man after God's own heart, we know he's more righteous in his heart though he's done sinful things, just like Noah did, just like Daniel did, just like Job is going to do before this book is over. But in a relative sense they're righteous. (18:15)

Now I know I often teach you, don't even think in relative terms when it comes to your justification and I'm not really big on you dwelling on relative terms as it relates to righteousness even in your sanctification but you need to know they're two radically different things. Now back to chapter 4, if you think just in absolute terms, you're going to look at Eliphaz's words and you're going to say, "You know he's right." Read it again, verse 7. Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Hmm, who that was innocent? I learned this in Sunday School, the wages of sin is death and I learned this in chapter 3 of Romans it says this, none is righteous no not one. Therefore everyone perishes because everyone is a sinner so who's ever innocent ever perished, well you're right. I guess the only one would be the exceptional atonement of Christ himself. That's the only one who's truly innocent who ever perished. But you're right. Or where were the upright cut off? Well, they aren't, that's like someone kind of attempts at stinging humor when the old question is asked. Why do bad things happen to good people? And a lot of orthodox evangelicals will go with their witty response, they'll say, "They don't." Did you follow that? Why do bad things happen to good people?" And they say, "They don't" They're not questioning that they're bad things they're questioning that they're good people because when Jesus was asked, hey, good teacher and this question came. He said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, no one is good but God alone." So if God alone is good then we're all bad and we're all sinners and if you're thinking justification you're absolutely right. Do you follow this train of thought? (19:54)

I understand that, that's why the next verse, I understand in absolute terms you're absolutely right. As I've seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. Had Job ever plowed any iniquity? Had he ever made any kind of trouble in his life? Well, of course he had, and if he's going to get the same back in his life I mean you're going to say, you're going to get what you deserve. Or to put it in terms of Galatians, you're going to reap what you sow, and in many ways if we speak in absolute terms, we do. We reap what we sow. (20:23)

By the breath of God they perish clearly no one dies on this planet without God's oversight in terms of his sovereign plan. He said it in Genesis 3 and we die because of his decree and by the blast of his anger they are consumed. So in an absolute sense we understand that. You could read these out of context and you can say, "Eliphaz you could be my Sunday School teacher." But if you read them in context, God has said in chapter 1, "Hey no in a relative sense Job is righteous." And that's where I am going to tell you it is really hard for us not to make these comparisons and to have a legitimate sense of "injustice" when you are doing the right things at your business and you see it fall apart. When you see the guy over here in his business cut all the corners, do illegal things and things that are not integrous in his heart and then he prospers. I mean I couldn't help, when I'm sitting there having my new born carted around in the neonatal ICU at Mission Hospital going in for brain surgery and spinal surgery and here she was hanging on by a thread to her life while I know down the hall in Labor and Delivery some 16 year old that got knocked up in the back seat of some car somewhere is having a completely healthy baby. And I got to think, well God I'm serving you, I doing your will, I'm giving my life, I'm spending and being spent for the souls of your people and what's going on here? I can see relative righteousness and I can see my suffering and this person's good and my daughter's pain and that baby is happy. And I think, God what's going on? (21:56)

Well, here's what I need to remember. The righteous suffer and that should be the expectation. As a matter of fact

the righteous, here's a mind blowing concept unless you've been here for a long time, the righteous are going to suffer more in this life. As a matter of fact becoming a righteous person not only by justification but now growing in your righteousness without compromise you will suffer more. I mean it's just going to happen that way. As a matter of fact, let's go back to chapter 1. Job chapter 1, it all started with statement, and I'm thinking, God if you like me, don't mention it in front of Satan. Verse 8, the Lord said to Satan, "Hey, look at Mike, isn't he just coming along as a preacher?" Listen God, shh." I don't want that because the response in verse 9 is, listen; you think Job fears you for no reason? Come on, you put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has. He is the spiritual trust fund baby, he is spoiled rotten on every side you bless him. Bless, bless, bless, bless that's all you do for him. Of course he loves you. You don't understand, he loves you because the gifts that you give him. You bless the work of his hands. All his possessions have increased, if he doesn't love you, I don't know who wouldn't. You blessed him so much. But if you pull back on his allowance a little bit, you let him have a little hard time like some of the people out there in the rest of the world have a hard time, you stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, you do something negative, oh he'll curse you to your face. Verse 12, is going to change the rest of the book, right here. And the Lord said to Satan, "Okay, look, behold, all that he has is in your hands. You want to take his stuff away and see what he does? I'll put some money on that bet." Of course he doesn't have to bet, there's no odds for God, he knows what's going to happen. So he says, "Fine, take his stuff away. But – middle of verse 12 – only against him, do not stretch out your hand." That's a great statement of God's sovereignty isn't it? We'll let the leach out here and you can go attack his wealth, you can even attack his family just don't attack him and then we'll watch and see what he does. The leash of the enemy let out in Job's life only goes so far. (24:17)

Interesting, now back to our passage. I kind of just read quickly over it in verse 11, behold there is a woman who had had a disabling – what's that word? Did you catch up with me on that? Verse 11, Luke 13. And behold there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. And if you're thinking they're just talking about her attitude, no, no, drop down to verse 16, middle of verse 16, talking about this woman again after the healing and the debate now with the synagogue ruler whom Satan bound for eighteen years. Now here's the doctor if anybody, Doctor Luke, the physician, is going to have biological explanations for the problems in people lives and he recognizes really this malady, this problem, this disability in her life it had a connection to the enemy and I guess any theological thinker is going to make that conclusion. Because really I don't care what the physical reason is for it ultimately the mess in this world is caused by an enemy and his work within the sons of disobedience even if you can say it's that guy, it's that person, it's that killer, it's that rapist, it's that thief, it's still going to come back to this, Satan, who's job it is, and his pleasure it is to steal, kill and destroy, that's what he's all about. So it's all about the sovereign leash on that enemy letting the leash out. Now I know we got problems when God lets the leash out and he allows the enemy to start taking down your business which you can point to legal reasons why and personal reasons why or in your marriage or in your relationships, or in your kids or whatever it is, in our government, in our politics, in our geopolitical situation and you're going to say, "Wow, these are bad things that are happening." Well, ultimately behind it all is an enemy who wants to destroy us and it's not just us, all the creation of God. It is under the curse of God which is in many ways the extension of the leash on the enemy, that's why when he shows up and the enemy is bound and taken away and cast ultimately into the lake of fire, we're not going to have these problems anymore. There's going to be a retreat of evil and one of the main agents of evil in the world is the enemy himself. And all I'm saying is this, I'm not trying to over spiritualize anything but you've got a problem in your life. I mean you can draw some kind of dotted line back to the spiritual battle that we face, because really our battle even though we can identify people and organizations and faces and litigants, it's really not against flesh and blood. Why are things bad? Why are things painful? Why are cells rebelling in your body? Ultimately because there's a rebel in the universe that hates us. And hates us doubly and not just because we're the creation of God, but because we're the recreation of Christ. And that's why we suffer the way we do. (27:02)

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and he got to work and he caused a lot of trouble. Then God let the leash out even further if you know the story. We don't have time for the whole story but then he goes after his body and as he sits there in bad health, burial for his children, his wife is nagging on him about you should just curse God and die, all of his stuff has been stolen, he sits there and now has his friends show up and say you know there must be some secret sin in your life. Which of course God has already said at the outset of the book, Nope, no he's not perfect, not in an absolute sense but he's doing the right stuff and yet he's suffering by the hand of the enemy because the sovereign decision of God to let the leash out. Now, I know when you suffer you're going to be quick to ask the question you've been waiting for me to address. Why would God do that? I can tell you this, that that question was asked, I mean it didn't take long for Job to start asking that, particularly when Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad start saying there's sin in your life. He goes, no there's not, there's not, there's not, stop it. But God where are, God

if I could just have a hearing with God, I've got a complaint. Because he knows his own heart and he knows he's not compromising, he's not sinning, he's not like David secretly sneaking across the street to his neighbor's wife, he knows what's going on in his heart and so he says, "God, come on, I've got a few issues here." Well, God does show up at the end of the book of Job. I don't have time to turn there, but you know what happens, right? God shows up and he takes him to the zoo as I like to say. (28:25)

And he says look at the world that I made, now that's kind of a bleak way to get the issues that I have. I want to know why I'm suffering. All my friends they tell me things that really intuitively I believe, the innocent prosper and the guilty suffer and I'm innocent, why am I suffering?" There is no answer. God just takes his resume and starts to show his resume and then he shows up in chapter 40 after going to the zoo and he says this. "Shall the fault finder contend with the almighty?" He who argues with God, let him answer, come on up, you had a case against me? After just a little bit of seeing the glory of God, having that elevated view of God he now responds and he says this, "Behold God I am of little account, what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I've spoken once, I will not answer twice. I will proceed no further." I'm sorry to have asked the question. He doesn't do that out of spite, he does it out of sincerity just like Paul when he gets down to the most thorny theological questions in the New Testament he says there in the middle of the book of Romans, listen if I really understand the potter and the clay, who is the pot to answer back to the artisan. Who? Who are we? Who are you to answer back to God? So I just advise you and it's very unsatisfactory if you don't have a high view of God, but let me encourage you to get a high view of God and then advise you when you want to ask God why me? Just, those are questions better left unasked. Just don't ask that. And I know some people say, well you'll find out one day. I'm not sure you will. I don't think when you get there to heaven you're going to be pulling up your to do list of questions for God. Hey, you know I wondered why back there you know in 2016 I didn't know why... I think you'd be much more like Job, who am I, I'm of little account. What shall I answer you, I lay my hand on my mouth. That's exactly what it says there in Isaiah 52 and 53. Kings will shut their mouths before him. (30:27)

I know if you're new to all this and you don't know the God of the Bible. You still want to sit there and put God on trial. But I want to let you know right now he's going to let the leash out on the enemy in the most complete answer we get in scripture, is that even in that he glorifies himself and allows himself to be the God who is in charge, having people that go through suffering and in the end he does promise us, it will work out for good, we may not always see why or how, but we understand as it says in 1 Peter chapter 5 our job is to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand so that at the proper time he can exult you, casting all your cares upon him because he cares for you. That may be the most oxymoronic statement of the morning when you're thinking about your own pain and I'm saying if God cared for me, we wouldn't let the dogs out in my life. I mean I wouldn't be sick, I wouldn't be suffering, I wouldn't have this relational problem, I wouldn't have this economic issue. Well that's not true. But just like Job couldn't see what was going on in the background in the spiritual battle he was in the midst of, can you just, just recognize that the promise has never been for you, if you're righteous you won't suffer. As a matter of fact you're going to be on the spot light and the radar of the enemy and I would say your odds humanly speaking go way up in terms of the suffering we incur in the words of the Apostle Paul it's through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. It's going to be a bumpy road, and when you hit those bumps, don't be disillusioned, you're right on track. When the picture in your life doesn't look like the picture on the box top, that's exactly how it's suppose to be. Now get to work, piece it together as best you can and trust one day when the glory of God is revealed it's going to be exactly how it ought to be. (32:10)

Verse 12, Luke chapter 13, here's this lady bent over, couldn't even straighten up, this is a serious problem with her body, she's been struggling with it for two decades, she's there at church when she should be, to put it in New Testament terms. Verse 12 says when Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." When Jesus saw her, he called her over and he said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." Now that's an emphatic declaration that the problem is solved, and in this case the temporal problem of a messed up back, and it's going to be temporally fixed, but it's not fixed in verse 12 though that's what I want to look at right now, verse 12. We have to get the whole picture by at least going into at least half way into 13. And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight. Let's break that into a sequence of 5 things real quick. (33:06)

He sees her, he calls her over, he makes the declaration, he touches her, he lays his hands on her and then she straightened up. You've got five things taking place there and they're all in sequence, right? The syntax and the conjunction at the beginning of verse 13 we see these in sequence. Jesus sees her. He calls her over, which I'm

thinking it seems a little rude but okay, she's going to shuffle over in her state. He wants her to come to him. Then he declares, "Woman you are freed from your disability." And then I should say let's just in this imaginary scene here if we're there, let's start the stopwatch, click, click, click, click, click. He's declared that's she's freed from it, but there's more that has to happen. Here's the conjunction in verse 13, and now he put his hands on her and then it says immediately – another conjunction – and immediately she was made straight. So I just want to look at the thing we're moving in the drama up to the healing. Was there any space between the declaration, you are freed from your disability, and the freedom from the disability? The answer is, 25 seconds, I mean I don't know how long it was, but there was some time there. Are you following this? He declares her after seeing her, calling her over, declaring her and then he's got to put his hands on her and when he does physically touches her, she straightens up. (34:33)

I think that's important for us to see the parallels to our lives, but not to over spiritualize this text. But in Romans there's that great chain of events that God has promised. He's promised them all so emphatically that for every child of God they're said as though they're completed in a perfect tense. Those he's predestined, he's called. Those he's called, he's justified, those he's justified, he's glorified. Remember those? He's predestined, he's called, he's justified, he's glorified. Quoting the middle of Romans chapter 8. Predestined, he's set his sights on us from eternity past. He's called us to himself in time we are drawn to him. He seeks us and that seeking is in our experience moving toward him and then justifies us. And that justification is something that happens in a point of time and that justification declaring us righteous then comes with an inheritance but that inheritance that's described with the next word, glorification, there's some time between it. And only for a few people is it seconds, for most of us it's years, decades between justification and glorification. (35:48)

But the reality of the declaration if it's a trustworthy person giving us something that's based on fact and not on some pie in the sky wish. If there's some credibility to the person saying you are freed from your disability, in our case you're freed from the sins in your life and you're freed from the penalty of the sins in your life and you're freed from really a sinful reality. Then the glorification, man that's certain. And I can be, number 2 on your outline, let's put it this way, I can be confident in future relief. (36:19)

2. Be Confident of Future Relief

I can be completely confident because he has for us in time if you sit here as a fellow regenerate Christian today, you are justified right now. What does that mean? I am completely by the finished work of Christ declared free from my sin as far as the east is from the west. There is no sin in my life. And the wages of sin is death, but here's the thing, Jesus has made it really clear because of his work, it's like he being the impetus and the purpose and the foundation and the predication of all good things we call life, he is the resurrection and the life and if we believe in him, if we trust in him even if we die, we're going to live. And if we believe in him, in that life, we will never die. So what does that mean? Here's the restoration of all things that is guaranteed to us at the moment of our justification. Our glorification is a done deal but we haven't experienced it yet. (37:10)

We have to get in the mindset that if we are justified, it is simply a matter of time until we are glorified. If he declares us righteous and he says I'm going to make everything crooked straight. We're starting with your relationship with the living God and now everything related to sin is going to be fixed. When? When the glory of the Lord is revealed. Let's put it in New Testament terms. 1 John chapter 3, I'll just quote it for you. It says, man how great a love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called Sons of God, Children of God. And such we are, and we are now Children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made manifest, it hasn't appeared. We haven't seen it. But we know when he appears, when we actually see him face-to-face when he appears we shall be like him, because we'll see him face-to-face. Everyone has his hope and purifies himself just as he is pure. Now here is a present effect of the future reality based on a declaration that's taken place for us, we are his children, that's justification. Are you following this? I've been justified, there is future glorification and right now I recognize that does something about the presence in my life of all the doubt, discouragement, disillusionment, I'm recognizing that future relief is coming. I can bank on it, I can be sure of it, I can be absolutely, 100% sure, my kids can go to sleep on the last night of that vacation being completely assured when they wake up that picture is going to be fixed. It will be done; they will be posing in the morning with a completed picture. Everything as C.S. Lewis rightly said, everything your heart desires that this world cannot afford is a reminder to you that God has made you for a world that is much much different. It's a completely different reality than this one, where there's no crime, no mourning, no death, no disease, none of that. And since this is a passage about a woman with a broken body there's not a person in the room unless you're in the peak of your health right now and you're young, who can identify at some

level with that. (39:08)

Let me turn you to 1 Corinthians 15 real quickly. 1 Corinthians 15 to remind you of a great passage just not even 3 verses, starting in verse 42. We're reminded of this, that because we are going to be made, as it says in verse 20 in the likeness of Christ, he is the firstfruits the prototype of those who have fallen asleep in Christ. Let's just remember what we're going to come back like. And this by the way is the microcosm of all things, relationships, the world, the government, everything. Our bodies are the place that it starts when that enemy, that adversary, death is defeated. What's sown perishable, verse 42, this is 1 Corinthians 15:42, it's raised imperishable. My decaying body, if you want to jot down a few cross references I'll give you one for each of these four. How about this one, Genesis 3:19, Genesis 3:19, our bodies were from the beginning when sin entered the picture decreed by God to degenerate. It will continue to degenerate, you are made of dust and to dust you will return it says in verse 19 of Genesis 3. And that means that for me, I got to remember, everything is on schedule when my life and my body and everything keeps getting worse and worse, it's decaying. But it's going to be raised impervious to that. It will be raised imperishable. It will no longer degenerate. That would be great, I mean, that would be fantastic, and the core of this is a Christ who can sit there in a locked room and eat broiled fish with the disciples and prove that he was as real as they were but without all the problems of being subject to death and disease and pain. What's sown in dishonor, verse 43, is going to be raised in glory. Doxa, glory, great Greek word. Something that's used if you want to put a second cross reference down, Matthew chapter 6 verse 29, Matthew 6:29, when he's talking about beauty, and something that's beautiful he speaks of Solomon and all his regalia and all of his glory, with all of his fine clothing on. Beautiful splendor its translated in some translations. And I know he's comparing it to something even more glorious which is the flower of the field, but he says, "Listen, that's what we're going to be in terms of this resurrected body, no longer in dishonor and break down but in beauty, in glory and in splendor. What's sown in weakness – verse 43 – is raised in power. Jot this one down, Matthew 26:41, Matthew 26:41, here they were in the garden falling asleep; Jesus looks at Peter and says, "I know your spirit is willing but your flesh is weak." You'd like to do the right things but you don't even have the energy to do, you don't have the power to do it, you don't have the wherewithal to do it. Your body is not cooperative; well you're going to get a body that's raised with endless power, boundless power with energy. (41:54)

It's sown a natural body, it'll be raised a spiritual body, if you think that means Casper the Friendly Ghost go back to that scene where he's eating fish with the disciples or broiling them on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in John 21, he is physical, he's real, he's got an esophagus, he's got teeth, he's got fingernails, he's got hair follicles, he's real and tangible but when we say spiritual put this reference down, Galatians chapter 5 verse 16. We're not talking about you're see through or Casper the Friendly Ghost we're talking about the reality of your body no longer craving things that are sinful. You can be of the flesh and you can do things according to the flesh or you can do things according to the Spirit. You can walk in step with the Spirit and that's the problem with my body, it's not only tired, it's not only wearing down and it's not only in many ways dishonorable, one day it'll be the opposite of all those things including the fact that right now it desires the wrong things, sinful things. I won't have that problem with my resurrected body. (42:46)

I know our kids imagine what that puzzle will look like when it's finished because they look at the box top but they have no idea how much better it'll be or how much bigger it'll be or how much more dramatic it'll be when we actually assemble it. And I got to tell you this; God is not in the business of over promising and under delivering. And what we read in Bible even gives us that caveat every now and then in the footnote you'll get the idea, the rhetorical footnote that, listen all I've told you about what's going to happen is going to exceed your expectations. It has not entered the mind of man, the kinds of unimaginable things that are God has prepared for those who love him. You have no idea how this is going to be he tells the Corinthians. Even when he speaks to the Ephesians he says listen far more than we could ever ask or imagine, God has the power to do those things and he's going to bring that glory to bear. In a temporal way in this church experience in life and in a maximal way when we see him face-to-face. An ageless body, beautiful body, energetic body, godly body, you can apply that to every relationship you're going to have in the kingdom, you can apply that to the governments of the kingdom when Jesus himself sits on the throne and the kingdoms of the world that are so messed up become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. Be confident in future relief, we need some. (43:59)

Thirdly verse 13, Luke chapter 13 verse 13, and he laid his hand on her just like we're going to see him face-to-face. His feet are going to touch down on the Mount of Olives and immediately she was made straight and so will our world. And if we see him tonight because he cracks through the sky the Bible is very clear about that promise. We'll

be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Our world will be changed the moment he comes back and then it says because of that change she glorified God, and that's the natural order of things isn't it? God does something great, you glorify God. God gives you relief, you glorify God. She got temporal relief, she glorified God. That makes sense, much like in chapter 17 when you have that Samaritan that got healed from his leprosy fell at the feet of Christ and he sat there and he was weeping and thanking God and praising God for healing him of his leprosy. Well, he would later die and that skin would later rot off his corpse, that's the reality of it but at that moment relief, thank you. Now he didn't have that kind of joy and thanksgiving when he says go show yourself to the priests but at that moment Christ had declared his disability gone and it was a matter of time before it was, when it was they gave thanks. Now that's the way we would expect it to be. And I can say, "Hey, you're going to be really happy in the kingdom and when it happens, get ready you're really going to rejoice, but that's not how it works in the Bible, at least not for immature Christians. Mature Christians can in the middle of their pain, in the middle of their problem, when he declares them righteous, or when he says, "Woman you're freed from your disability." At that moment they can rejoice even if it's 20 seconds later that they receive that. In our case it may be decades until we receive it. We should be able to thank God and glorify God in advance. Number 3 on your outline, let's put it that way, we need to sincerely thank God in advance. (45:48)

3. Sincerely Thank God in Advance

And I say mature Christians in the Bible have acted this way, and they have. Paul and Silas can be in stocks in the basement of a damp Philippian jail and they can be singing songs of thanksgiving to God. Why? Because they know their ultimate deliverance is coming. Even if they don't get out of this jail they're free from the penalty of sin and they can thank God they're not going to spend eternity in a dungeon. They're very excited about their future, so much so that they're going to thank God before it happens. That's a good prayer to pray. I grew up hearing my Dad pray that prayer, God we thank you in advance, I wish we'd hear more of that in our own praying. Not just about the temporal things that may happen tomorrow or tonight or next month, but the fact that you're going to walk through the arches of the kingdom and he's going to say, "Here it is prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Everything crooked straight, everything rough made smooth. I mean that's the ultimate hope, it's called the Blessed Hope of the Christian Life Paul says. It is the consummation of the ages, it is the fulfillment of all that we desire, and God says it's coming, thank me now for what I will do then. Why? Because his temporal restorations demonstrate his ability for the eternal restoration and he'll bring that. (46:56)

My staff for some weird reason has really gotten into soccer, I don't understand it. My fellow pastors have gone crazy, and I really don't - maybe I'm of that generation, I don't get it. But so I have to start learning about this because they're all into it. I mean they're buying jerseys, wearing them to the office then I don't get it. Have I said I don't understand it? I don't understand it. So I started asking about what's the thing, when's the Super Bowl of soccer this year, you know, when's the World Series, I don't know what it is. And I find out it's called the World Cup, the FIFA World Cup, it doesn't sound very manly to me. They're into this FIFA World Cup, well who's playing this year? Where is it? And I find out it's not every year. Well, is it every other year? What is it? They do it every four years, they get around to this. They had the last one in Brazil apparently and the next one is going to be in Russia they tell me, for the FIFA World Cup. I even asked, "Well, where is it going to be?" Well, it's going to be in Russia. Well, where in Russia? Well, all over Russia. I didn't even get that, I didn't understand that, but apparently that's how it works, and some of you know and don't write me, I don't care. I don't need to be informed; I can ask the experts on my staff who are always checking scores during meetings I'm trying to lead. Anyway, wearing jerseys, did I tell you they're wearing jerseys now to meetings? I bet once I looked up this World Cup thing to see what it was all about, of course I tend to go to the business section whatever to find out, you know how expensive these tickets are to go to the World Cup? I mean they're almost impossible, they're the hardest tickets to land, part of the World Cup. Now, let's just say I come to my staff meeting this week, and I have in my little pocket some tickets, really good seats to the FIFA World Cup. I know it's an acronym or something isn't it? I don't care, don't write me. And not only do I have tickets but I have, I've got like a five star hotel reservations, paid for, if there are any five star hotels in Russia, I'm not sure. And then I pull out Russian airline first class, is there a Russian airline? Probably not, American Airlines, and I got them stacked up there. I've got FIFA tickets, I've got World Cup Russia, I've got hotel reservations - paid for, I've got first class airline tickets, I've got them all. I pull them out, that would get their attention off those laptop screens won't it? There it is, hey, I just want to give this to somebody today, all you soccer fans, football fans, whatever you call yourself. Here they are. (49:42)

I'll bet if I walked around I'd have their attention wouldn't I? I'd say, "I'm going to give these tickets to..." and I



lay them down in front of one of those pastors, what would their disposition be at that moment. Pretty excited, I think, pretty excited. Well, this is the 2018 FIFA World Cup, I mean this is not even this year, it's not even next year, but if I laid those tickets down and they knew I wasn't the kind of practical joker to be doing this kind of thing, and I would just I would think they would believe me, here it is. I'll bet they would get up in their silly jersey and dance around the room. I'd bet they'd hoot and holler I'll bet they'd say, nah, nah, nah, to the guys that didn't get them. They would be thrilled and they haven't even experienced it yet. (50:32)

I just think we don't have enough excitement presently about the things God is going to do in the future, in part because maybe like me, you don't get it because you've never experienced it and you don't even learn anything, it's like me saying you know the Supraflamber Tournament is going on next year, do you want tickets for it? You wouldn't want tickets for that because you don't even know what I said, because I just made it up, it doesn't mean anything. But maybe it's the coolest thing you've ever seen. You don't know. If you think we're floating around on cotton ball clouds with see through bodies with you know golden harps checking into the eternal hymn sing for the rest of eternity, you may say, "Well, I mean that doesn't sound very exciting." Because you don't understand what's going to happen. God has made you to desire a set of things that you will never find in this earth. Did you understand that? Not in your family life, not in your home life, not in your work life, not in your career, not in your recreation, not in the world, not in the community, you won't find it. God has created you for a perfect place without reference to sin and he's going to bring it into this world. Valleys raised up, mountains made low, crooked straight and the rough places plain. He proved he can do that with a word and in this case a word and a touch so that you would look at the brokenness of this life and say, "Not a problem." So maybe you'd say with Psalm 112 my favorite Psalm, three verses 6 through 8, listen the righteous never moved, they're not moved. They're never moved because they'll be remembered forever. God remembers them, saints remember them, the angels, they are recognized and they're important in God's economy. The righteous not afraid of bad news, not afraid, I mean it's a little discouraging from time to time but we're not disillusioned. We're not disheartened, the righteous not afraid of bad news, the righteous heart is firm trusting in the LORD. We know his word is good, he has promised us the consummation of all things. His heart is steady, he will not be afraid verse 8 says, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. And our adversaries really aren't the people that you think of when I say that. Although many of them are culpable in concert with the enemy and the enemy will one day be defeated, our foes will be vanquished. Even 1 Corinthians 15, death itself will be the last adversary to be defeated and even that we should rightly hate it, but it's simply the work of the enemy. The righteous will never be moved; you'll be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. He is steady; and he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. (53:14)

I hope you and I can get excited about our future, have the kind of poise, peace, assurance in the midst of whatever bumps you might be experiencing. It may be as bad as Job for you, you may think it's as bad as Job for you and if it is, take heart, as Jesus said in this world you will have tribulation but take heart I've overcome the world. It's yet to be seen but I hope you sit here with your reservation in place because you've been justified and if you have one day we'll all be glorified. Let's pray. (53:47)

God help us as Christians in a world filled with bad news, we can open up our browser and we can read about ISIS, we can read about American politics, we can read about California politics. We can look at the workplace, we can look at crime statistics, we can look at our test results from our last doctor's visit, we can look at a lot of things and get discouraged and God while groaning maybe appropriate as you say in the Old Testament prophets to be disheartened is not appropriate. For your children to despair is never appropriate. Oh I understand if we don't have tickets then I get it, we have no hope. But because of your work in our lives of predestining us, calling us to yourself, justifying us we can be assured we will be glorified. So God help us to have the kind of biblical optimism I often call it to look at the present in light of the future and not be discouraged in our lives. Let us be hopeful, kind of hope that transforms our disposition presently in our lives. Do this God for your sake and your glory. In Jesus name. Amen. (54:59)