



When Life Takes a Left Turn-Part 1 Holding Tight to the Right Perspective

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Well, for us it began with a routine ultra sound when after hearing the excitement of discovering we have a daughter, the room grew strangely quiet, and our most recent trip down the left turn lane began when the doctor said: "We have a serious problem here"; and for you it may also have started in a doctor's office. I know for some of you it did, when after praying that all the tests would just turn out perfectly you were informed reluctantly by the doctor that the tests don't look so good.

Perhaps your bend in the road began around the kitchen table when the one who promised years ago to love, honor and cherish you has let you in on that fact that he or she doesn't think it's working out anymore. Or maybe your painful excursion started with a meeting in the boss's office, or maybe it was a letter from a lawyer, or a phone call from a family member, or an e-mail from a friend. However it starts, all of us know what it's about. It's that painful life's excursion down a path that we, in a million years, would never choose for ourselves; and yet it's been chosen for us and we find ourselves in the middle of it and no amount of screaming, or crying or frustration will get us out of it. We are there and we are in the middle of it and we are left to navigate this course – a course we never anticipated. And that course we are left to steer is one that we can only steer successfully if we grab on tightly to what scripture has to say; and so much of the battle is a battle in our mind between whether we are going to believe the truth of or abandon those truths for some other set of beliefs.

And so what I want to do this morning is to look at a variety of passages beginning with Col. Chapter 1, our old friend, the Book of Col.; and I want to be reminded about what our life is really supposed to be for. What is the purpose of our being – why do we exist? Now I know the problem with most of us is we are so easily swayed by our culture and those around us that we like to define our lives a little differently than scripture does. And yet, in the midst of trial, we had better define our lives biblically; if we don't, pain will devastate us. When we find ourselves facing some difficult trial, some crisis in life, we'll say: "Ouch! This hurts so badly, I can't handle it; we'll get to that place if we've come to the conclusion that so many in America have, that our life is supposed to be about happiness. It's supposed to be about comfort. It's supposed to be about prosperity.

As Thomas Jefferson once said, "The art of living life is simply avoiding the pain". Now if that's your philosophy of life, you will be sorely disappointed because, not only was Thomas Jefferson a failure at that, I have been a failure at that; and more profoundly, Jesus Christ was a failure at that because the goal is not to avoid the pain. The goal of life is found in passages like this. Look at it with me in verse 18 of Col. Chapter 1. Actually, let's get a little context starting in verse 15, as the Apostle Paul speaks of Jesus Christ, and he says: "He is the image of the invisible God; He is the prototokis, the First Born, the One in charge, the One at the front of the line, the One with the birthright over all creation". It's not a statement of His origin; it's a statement about His rank. He is the firstborn over all creation, for by Him (verse 16) it says, all things were created. Things in



heaven, on earth, visible, invisible (it doesn't matter), whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things; and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church. He is the beginning and the protokis, the firstborn among the dead, so that in everything He might have the (underline it) supremacy. See, the bottom line, if you grab a Christian mindset, you will be forced to conclude that your life is not about happiness, it's not about pleasure, it's not about freedom from pain; that your life is supposed to be about exalting Jesus Christ, bringing glory to God.

Number one on your outline, I put it this way: we need to ask the question and think; we need to say, "What is my life about; I put it this way: "Remember your goal in life". And the answer to that is: "It is to glorify God". Not to live a pain-free life, and when we recognize that and we can grab that and say: "My purpose is to exalt Christ, it is to be sold out to the supremacy of Christ; then my circumstances become somewhat irrelevant because really the question, when I encounter pain, is not quickly to say: "Oh God, how can you get me out of this"? – The question might be, "How can I glorify you in this", you see. Oh the circumstances changed – I thought I was taking this path, You've now steered me down this path, and if my goal is to glorify You, my question is, "On this new path, how can I glorify You?" And there might be new opportunities there you never saw on the other path. As a matter fact, there always are; and we need to say, "It is about my comfort or is it about His glory".

Turn with me to Phil. Chapter 1. Here is a guy that knew about detours in life. Talk about 'left turns' – the Apostle Paul, this great missionary, should be out there, with these make-shift pulpits, preaching the Gospel of Christ and instead he's in shackles in a prison, writing a letter to the Philippians. And he says this – look at this in verse number 19, he says, "I know that through your prayers and the help given, by the spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." Now immediately our mind go to, "well that means gates of the prison come open, he gets out, he goes free and he gets back to his business". I he's got something bigger in mind than that. His deliverance, the ultimate fulfillment of his life; let's take a look at it in verse 20. He defines it for us, "I eagerly expect and I hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now", in the middle of a prison, "as always, Christ will be exalted in my body"; (I love this phrase) "whether by life or by death. For to me, verse 21 says, to live is Christ". Now I know we like to quote the last part, "to die is gain"; that's a good context too, but his life is about Christ. This interval between birth and death, he says, it's about exalting Christ, and I will do it – whether it's in prison or out preaching on a pulpit somewhere in the middle of Macedonia. The idea here is I'm going to exalt Christ – here, there or anywhere. Whether by life or by death or anything in between; rich or poor, sickness, health – it doesn't matter. The idea is to exalt Christ. So my question in the midst of pain is not quickly, "God, what can You do for me here"? It should be quickly, "God, what can I do for You here? I got a new path now. It's different; how can I glorify You here"?

I tell you what, if we lose our bearing on that, and we make Christ ancillary to my life, and He becomes this servant on the out spokes of my life, who's now supposed to help me, then we'll be crazy, we'll go nuts. We'll be frustrated; we'll be depressed. You will absolutely "lose it" because that's not the way it's supposed to be. You're trying to take a scenario, a paradigm, and force it



onto the Christian life and it doesn't belong there. You are not the center, it is not about you, you see.

I discovered my unborn daughter has a birth defect; a serious life-threatening situation; the question isn't, "Oh God, quick help...." it's not about me. I recognize I want God's mercy and grace and I ask you to pray for it, but I'm telling you, when life takes a left turn, and I start looking at a whole different life than I envisioned just two weeks ago, the question isn't, "Oh God quickly help and change or fix this 'cause really You're here for me"..No, I'm here for You. That's the real bottom line. And when you're facing your crisis, we cannot lose that mindset, 'cause the minute we lose it, we try to redefine "Christianity"; now does that mean Rom. 8:28 is not true? No, Rom. 8:28 is true, it's true, but it's funny how the Christian community is so quick to take that one verse out of scripture and say: "Let's quickly quote it; oh everything is going to work out for good. " You know the passage, right? Now I know that's a wonderful act that God does, in the midst of our trials, He'll take all the things of our life and work them out for good to those that love God, who are called according to His purpose. That's a great verse to quote, but before you go quoting Rom. Ch. 8 vs. 28, be sure you take a good hard look at Phil 1:20, that we just read: "We are to live to exalt Christ, whether by life or death, sickness, health, rich or poor, employed, unemployed, cancer cells or no cancer cells. See, it doesn't matter. I am here to glorify and exalt Christ. If we can get that in our minds; if we can figure out that's the way it works, that will change a lot of things about our lives.

That reminds me of the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. My kids love that bedtime story. I don't know if it's the fiery furnace, I don't know if they just like hearing me say those three words, but they love to hear about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Now, as I read them that story, whether it's in a children's book or whatever, I always feel it's missing that one powerful statement in Daniel Chapter 3; so I always have to include it, even when I'm reading something that doesn't include it because it's such a great statement by those three guys, who stood there in the face of adversity, at the entrance of the blazing furnace of fire, and they said to Nebuchadnezzar, "Hey look, I know that God can deliver me from this". Do you remember that? "He can take me right out of your hands; He can save us from this fire." But I love what they say next. Do you know what the text says? "But even if He doesn't, we just want you to know, here's where we stand, we're not serving you and your stinking idols and bowing down to your stuff, we're not going to do it because we live for God. And God can deliver us, He can deliver us and that would be great, but if He doesn't deliver us, nothing changes about my life orientation. My mindset is the same." We gotta say that.

"Oh God, heal this person, heal that marriage"; and that's great. Pray those prayers, but realize this, even if He doesn't fix it, it doesn't change our perspective in life. See because if your goal is to be happy, man your whole life is ruined. If your goal is to have a perfect family, then your life is ruined. If your goal is to live in prosperity, then your life is ruined. I do not know what to tell you. I can't help you. If your life is to glorify God, nothing really changes.

Oh, the forum, the avenue, the venue in which we glorify Him, that will change, but the purpose of life doesn't change. The focus of life doesn't change. Remember your goal in life. The next time

you take a left turn, and you find yourself on a path you never anticipated, and it's painful, just remember – your goal in life, whether by life or death or anything in between, you want Christ to be exalted.

There's another passage that came to my mind and another question that needs to be answered. I'd like you to turn to the book of Job to get a little sense of this. Obviously, our mind, when we run into problems, our minds and our scripture and our Bibles usually turn to the Book of Job and usually the first chapter of Job. So awful, this terrible situation that comes raining down in Job's life; what gets me about Job's response to it all is something that I think he had nailed, at least in the first two chapters that I think that we need to hold tightly onto. When everything was ripped out of his hand, his children were killed, his money went down the tubes; marauders came in and took all that he had, here is what he says. Do you know the text? Verse 21 of Chapter 1. He understands something about God's economy. He says: "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart." I didn't have anything coming in and I'm not going to have anything coming out. Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away; may the name of Yahweh be praised." What, what? What do you mean? He's not mad; he's not shaking his fist at God. He's not angry. Well, you should be angry; this is not, this is not fair.

Number 2 on your outline – I think this is very important. When we hit a left turn in life, we need to re-think "Fairness". We need to re-think the whole concept. Re-Think "fairness". Job understood something about absolute fairness. He recognized something about his life. If he has healthy kids, it's grace – it's a gift from God. If he has a good job, it's grace, it's a gift from God. If it's a great day and I'm healthy and everything is good and everything is going fabulous and all the stocks are going up and you know what? It's all grace, it's all a gift from God.

Matter of fact; go down further in Chapter 2, when his lovely wife chimes in with her advice. Look at his response. Look at verse 9. His wife said to him, "Are you still holding your integrity"; now he's sick, he's got boils all over his body, "Curse God and die". You see, she's got a mixed up idea about fairness. She thinks that God "owes" Job a better life. He replies, "You're talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

Are we going to accept from God the grace of God, and then if perhaps He wants to take some of that grace away – if He wants to take a little bit of that favor back. If He gives, we're going to take it. Now if all of a sudden trouble comes, I don't want to take that. Why? Because deep in our hearts, the sinfulness of our flesh says, "I deserve better than this". And the Bible's resounding answer is, "No you don't". "No you don't". Now I know this is the hard part of the sermon, so take your seatbelt, attach it firmly. Make sure it's....you know...the turbulence is coming "bing"! Please stay seated during this part of the sermon, because if you're not a Christian for sure man, just plug your ears because this will not compute. I mean the hard drive will freeze up on this. But you know what scripture says? Sin, sickness, pain – all the things we hate – they're not accidents; they're not an element in reality beyond the control of God. They are, as Doctor Carson likes to put it, "they are simply the measured outworking of God's judicial penalty for sin because in Gen. 2:17, He said, "the day you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die."

Oh, but God, we don't deserve that. Oh yeah, we do. Everything that relates to sickness, pain, all the troubles, all the bereavements of life, it's nothing more than the outworking of the judicial sentence we earned way back in the Garden and we confirmed it generation after generation after generation.

Now I know that it doesn't compute for you non-Christians; you don't get it. That's way too deprecating, you know, I don't understand that. Where's the feel good church? Well, you've pulled into the wrong parking lot because the reality is that in this life, sickness, pain and death is a part of the equation. "The wages of sin is" – Rom. 6:26 – is happiness, right? – I was hoping it was happiness and pleasure and good health. See the real question for a fallen convicted and sentenced sinful family of people – the human race – is not when the doctor says that you have cancer and the oncologist explains to you that it's a group of cells that are rebellious, see, rebellious cells that are tearing up your body because they have not kept their proper domain. The real wow in your life should not be: "why does my body have rebellious cells," the question should be, "why aren't all the cells in my body that way?" The question isn't, when you go for your physical, "why do I get diagnosed with this illness?" The question should be, "why would I ever be diagnosed once with health?" It doesn't make any sense because everything we get that's good is the **grace of God**. And so we don't sit back and shake our fists at God and say, "it's not fair, it's not fair". Oh, you don't want God's fairness. I don't think you really want that. You don't want His justice and you don't want His fairness. We want more of His grace; I understand that. But He gives His grace – day in and day out. And the question isn't, "man, why does my baby have a mal-formed spine", the question is, "how did I have two that their spines worked; I don't understand it." That's amazing; that's the grace of God because I don't deserve it. We don't deserve it. And that's a different perspective. That's one level of thinking about fairness. Let's talk about another because some of you say, "check, I know that; praise God, amen; right, I learned that in theology class. That's good stuff.

Here's the part that really bothers us though. Factor in the equation the concept of grace. Factor that in. Okay, well sure, okay, we all deserve God's worst and He's giving us a lot of good things though; and what bothers me is not that I understand that God should give me worse, but He gives me a lot of good things and here's a little bad, the question is, "why do I have more bad in life than that guy across the street?" See, by the end of the Book of Job, Job is struggling with a whole new question. He's got guys wagging his finger in Job's face saying, "well your life has gotten so bad – compared to certainly our lives, because his friends were saying, "our lives are pretty good"; "well your life has gotten so bad because you must have done something wrong in your life." And Job starts getting mad at that; and eventually, that perspective of fairness begins to overtake him – this relative sense of fairness – because he thinks why are their camels still in their garages and my camels aren't anymore? Why do they have healthy kids and why do I have dead kids now? And that's where Job got because it wasn't this ultimate sense of fairness; he understood that in the first two chapters; by the end of the book, he's saying why is this relative sense of fairness so out of whack? Why do the people that are worse than me, I mean by relative terms, they're worse than me, why do they have better lives than me? Why are their bodies healthy?

Turn to Psalm 37 with me. David knows a little bit about this. We ought to check in with him. He knew what it was like to be wandering around in the desert when his predecessor sat on a throne in Jerusalem, having women feed him grapes, and yet he was sinful, he was someone who wanted to kill David, he was someone who was committed to every form of compromise; and David says, wait a minute, I've got integrity in my heart, and I'm out here trying to find a rock to put under my head to sleep on tonight. I don't understand this. But he processed it and with God's Spirit he understood it and he put this down for us – generations later - as we look across the way and say, "why is that guy's body healthy, why does that guy have a good marriage, why is that person's job still in tacked?" We need to understand this. If you find the wicked the people that are less righteous than you prospering, David says, "Listen, do not fret, Vs 1. "Do not fret because of evil men; don't be envious of those who do wrong."

For really, you've got to get this perspective. Don't talk about fairness. There's something about delayed justice and it's on its way because "they, like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. Hey, you trust in the Lord. Do good. Dwell in the land, enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will (future tense) give you the desires of your heart." That may not be now; it may not be in the next five days, it may not be in the next five years. It may be in the next 50 years, but keep committing your way to Yahweh. "Trust in Him and He will do this; He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn." Sometimes the nights are long and we want dawn to come and it isn't coming fast enough for us, but, "trust Him and justice of your cause will be like the noonday sun. Be still before Yahweh. Wait patiently for Him. Do not fret when men succeed in their ways – when they carry out their wicket schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath. Do not fret. Do you get the theme of this passage yet? Don't fret. It only leads to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in Yahweh, they will one day, inherit the land. A little while the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found, but the meek, they'll inherit the land. They will enjoy great peace. The wicked, they plot against the righteous; they gnash their teeth against them, but the Lord, He laughs at the wicked, for He knows their day is coming."

Drop down to the bottom of the passage. He goes on about the same theme and he wraps it up. Look at Vs. 34. "Wait for the Lord, keep His way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you'll see it." Vs. 35. "I have seen the wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree on his native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more; I looked for him, but he could not be found. I have already seen this worked out in life here and now. Consider (Vs. 37) the blameless, observe the upright. There is a future for the man of peace, but sinners will be destroyed; the future of the wicked cut off. The salvation of the righteous comes from Yahweh; He will be their stronghold; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble. Yahweh helps them; He delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them because they take refuge in Him."

Don't fret, don't fret. It doesn't seem fair. I realize that. The ultimate sense to fairness – we don't even want to talk about that. Talk about relative sense of fairness? I understand. That's a bit of a thorny problem, but you know what the scripture says? "Hang on"! Just hang on. Fairness is not something we need to see right this minute. God will work out relative fairness, but he'll do it in His time. So, in the meantime....let me add one more point to this from First Peter Chapter 4;

number 3 on your outline. It's so simple it hardly needs to be written. But let's write it down anyway. Number 3: "Don't be surprised by pain; don't be surprised by pain, because from now until we get there, there's going to be a rocky road for all of us. Some, maybe not as rocky as others, but, man in this world, we will have tribulation, Jesus said. In 1 Peter 4 it says we ought to arm ourselves for this. Look at verse 1. 1 Peter 4 – are you turning there? Thank you. 1 Peter 4 – now I recognize that the entire 4th Chapter of 1 Peter primarily is dealing with hostility of an angry ungodly world at godly people. But I am telling you, as I pondered this passage this week. Jesus was subject to far more than that. Ultimately He was subject to death and murder. He was subject to death and murder. Oh, we don't read the stories about Him waking up with the flu, but He was also subject to sickness and decay in His body and got tired, John 4 says. He got parched; He was weary. All of that. I know that Jesus had the same problems we have in that He was someone subject in this human life, in this human body to the same kind of depravity, in terms of His body and His flesh and the hostility of a sinful world. All that's true. So, in one sense I fully identify with that; and He says this in Vs. 1 – "If Christ suffered in His body, then listen guys, arm yourselves with the same attitude. Get ready; gear up because it's going to happen to you. Now drop down to the punch line – verse 12

"So dear friends" ...here's what it gets down to: if Christ suffered, don't be surprised at the painful trial you're suffering as though some strange thing were happening to you. Here's what Peter is saying: "What did you expect"? – Sinful world; and I love the way Tozer puts it and it's always brought encouragement to me in the midst of the trials. He says to bring ourselves into the complete and voluntary obedience to Christ is to invite trouble from a hostile world, and to incur such unhappiness as may naturally follow, add to this the temptations of the devil and a lifelong struggle with this corrupted flesh and it will be obvious that we will need to defer most of our enjoyments to a more appropriate time. What did you expect down here? Really, did you expect this to be...he says listen, don't be surprised by the pain, but instead (vs. 13) it says "rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed." I love the way the focus takes this look from the present to the horizon.

Vs. 19

After he talks about making sure we're not suffering for our own stupid sinful decisions, he says: "so then those who suffer according to God's will, they ought to just commit themselves to their faithful creator and just to continue to do good. Just keep doing good 'cause Remember you are here to glorify God. Keep exalting Christ – just do good. This is a hard path; it's not the path you would have chosen. Keep doing good because one day His glory will be revealed. That's number 4, and this is where I've been all week. Keep thinking about forever. ; Ultimately, eyes to the horizon. Ultimately God's got a plan that will ultimately not come to full fruition until we stand there in the presence of Christ. Keep thinking about forever.

Let's think about it for a minute. Rev. Chapter 21. Let's go to the end of the book. You know when I think of this passage and I realize that my frustration toward pain and sickness and anger toward bad things, I realize part of it is because of my depravity and arrogance. I recognize that, though I want it better, I certainly don't deserve it. But there's another part of me – if you can follow this for a second - that longs for perfection because God has imprinted His image in my soul. Do you know what I'm saying? I'm made in the image of God and because of that I am



ultimately made to dwell in the perfect place, worshiping the perfect God with perfect people in a perfect economy. That's really what God designed me for.

So in one sense, I get frustrated and angry when bad things happen because of my arrogance and depravity and I think I deserve better and I gotta knock myself back and say, "Listen, you don't deserve anything"; but then there's another part of me that I don't like this illness and sickness and this difficulty and these trials because in reality I know in the depths of my heart there's one part of me that's been created and reflects still, though marred obviously by sin, the image of God. And God says, "Listen, those who are redeemed they're going to experience that to the full, and that's where my heart ultimately goes – that longs for this day.

When John says he saw, vs. 1, "A new heaven and a new earth" – for the first heaven, by the way, and the first earth, (here we go) they passed away. No longer any sea; that's when we're going to go like this [rub hands together] and go, "good enough with me" – let it go. –

"I saw the holy city, this new home this New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully prepared for her husband." Can you imagine our hearts palpitating at that point?

"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men!' The same way it was supposed to be back there in Genesis. "And He will live with them and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. If you didn't catch it, God's going to be with us. That will be amazing!

He will, at that point, wipe away every tear from our eyes, 'cause in that place there will be no death, no mourning no crying or pain, for the old order of things that we're so familiar with and that caused so many tears in our lives – gone – passed away. And, as if we didn't catch it, He who was seated on the throne said I am making **everything** new. And then He said, hey, write it down, I'm not just talking here; these words are trustworthy and true.

Do you every get buyer's remorse? I get that – I've got a bad case of buyer's remorse all the time. But, you know, if there's ever more than two zeros on that check, for whatever it might be, it just keeps me up for days, right? But one way I deal with my buyer's remorse is, the next day, after I've grappled with writing that check for whatever is, I pull the calculator out; and I often do this. I just start doing the math – I break it down. If I paid \$1,000 for some high speed, new-fangled refrigerator, put that puppy in there and there it is; and I'm thinking, "Oh my goodness, just to keep milk cold," you know. And I struggle with that big check. I pull out the calculator and I start doing the math. Well, if this puppy lasts 15 years, let's just say that; okay, what's it going to cost me per year? Well I did the math; let just say 17 cents per day, by the way, so I'm feeling better. I can pay 17 cents to keep my milk cold; I hope it keeps it cold – and ice in the door, to boot – right? I mean I'm doing alright now. I've arrived. But helping me recognize, "hey, it's only 17 cents per day here – that's helpful to me 'cause that – that's a manageable amount; that's the kind of stuff you pull out of your pocket at the end of the day and throw into your drawer there. I mean, no big deal, 17 cents". That kind of logic is often presented to us in scripture.



The last passage, I promise, Rom. Chapter 8. I don't always keep those promises, but I will this time - the last passage this morning. Such an encouragement to me this week as I see the Apostle Paul pushing his calculator to the side of the desk, breaking his pencil and saying, "Hey guys, it's not even worth computing here. I mean for me to calculate this down to 'what's it going to feel like over 15 years of enjoyment'; I'm thinking that sticker shock can be alleviated by seeing how it pans out over 15 years...Paul starts thinking about the kinds of sufferings maybe we go through in maybe 4 years - maybe 40 years. He says, 'let's just do the math here; let's just think about it.' And he concludes this in verse 18, he says, "I've come to this conclusion, "I consider that our present sufferings are not even worth comparing." I mean it really, doesn't even add up, we're talking \$0.00; it doesn't even count anymore, with the glory that will be revealed in us and that will be eternal forever. I want to think about forever because there, if I have to suffer for 4 years, if my daughter has to suffer for 40 years, you know what, really, in the long run, when me and Stephanie sit in the New Jerusalem forever; it really "ain't no big deal". Thinking back to a few years of struggle down here on this planet, it ain't a big deal, and he says, "I'm not even going to compare it anymore - it doesn't even compute. The creation itself, it waits in eager expectation for the beginning of this eternal thing; it can't wait for the sons of God to be revealed, vs. 20, for the creation was subjected to frustration. Not by its own choice - read Gen. 3 right, but by the choice of the One who subjected it, in hope (I love that) that the creation itself will one day be liberated from its bondage to decay, and it'll be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of child birth, right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, dah, obviously, who have the first fruits of the spirit, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons and the ultimate graduation, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. First Cor. 15, remember Paul, "if it's all about this life, we got ripped off"; let's go play golf this morning, right? It doesn't make any sense. But it ain't about this life. It's in this hope that we were saved. If it's a hope that's seen, it's no hope at all through hope that he already has. This isn't all that we're going to get here. Verse 25, "but we hope for what we do not yet have"; if that's our hope and if it's eternal and it doesn't even compute, then right now in the midst of our pain we can wait for it patiently. You can be patient, it's okay. Pain, struggle, divorce, unemployment, sickness - it doesn't matter. Let's just work through this. Patiently wait. Why - because my hope is fixed on eternity. I'm telling you what - some people think, "so heavenly minded, no earthly good," hogwash! By the time we get heavenly minded and we focus on that eternal home, man, that's when right now in my life, things start to click. I manage these things, we work out these problems; we conquer these rough roads.

Indulge me as I read from Spurgeon, please. A great sermon, given on Nov. 22, 1863. I love this; I wouldn't read it if it didn't minister to me hugely this week; and perhaps it will minister to you. He said, "A man whose life shall be one even in smooth path, will see but little of the glory of God, for he has few occasions of self-emptying and hence but little fitness for being filled with the greatness and revelation of God. They who navigate little streams in shallow creeks, they know but little of God's tempests. But they who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep among the huge Atlantic waves of bereavement, poverty, sickness and reproach, we learn the power of YWEH because we feel the littleness of man. Self-esteem, that speck in the eye, which most effectually mars our human vision, the Great Surgeon of souls, it removes this from us chiefly by sanctified afflictions.



At the mouth of the furnace, the Great Purifier sits as a refiner/purifier of the sons of Levi, and when this work has been achieved and they become pure of heart, the divine purpose has been accomplished and God's glory is manifested. For the pure in heart, they shall see the Lord. Thank God then, dear brothers, if you've been led down a rough road, it is this which has given you your experience of God's loving kindness. Your troubles have enriched you with a wealth of knowledge to be gained by no other means. Your trials have been the cleft in the rock which God has set you as He did His servant Moses, that you might behold His glory as it passes by. Praise your God, oh sons of sorrow, you have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which continued prosperity might have involved. Bless Him that you have been capacitated to show forth His glory by being permitted in honor to endure a great fight of affliction. For our one aim in life is, I trust, to glorify God; and if so, are not those afflictions precious which enable us to honor Him. We'll call them friends if they'll help us to praise Him. We'll wear them as jewels and rejoice in them as a bride rejoices in her adornments, if they aid us in glorifying our blessed Lord."

Did life take a left turn for you? It's okay. Let's glorify God in it.

Pray with me. "Lord, help us never to get the center of our lives out of focus. Though some will peddle Christ as though He is the solver of every problem and everything that ails us, we understand scripture to clearly say that salvation and our relationship with God, is really not ultimately about us. It's about His glory and His greatness. So Lord, re-adjust our thinking the next time we see our lives take a painful left turn, and say "we will hold onto the truth that we exist for You; that You don't exist for us. We are here to bring glory to You in sickness or in health – with cancer or no cancer – with troubled situations or bad marriages, or whatever it is God, we are going to work these things through as best we can to bring glory to your name. And in these trials we'll learn so much. God, we'll understand what it means to enthrone You and exalt You in our lives. And you are gracious, God, and we don't want to minimize that in any way. You're a great and wonderful God to ease our pain and bring us comfort. But Lord, this morning, help us to hold tightly to the truths that we've exposed in scripture this morning that we may not be surprised by difficult times, but instead we might focus on the ultimate resolution when the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is enthroned, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our LORD and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever and we will sit there and continue on a path that I hope is unbroken – one of focused attention on giving glory and praise to God. God, you're our hope, you're our strength, you're our refuge; we'll hold on tightly to you, in Jesus' Name, Amen!