

Good Mourning

Finding Purpose in Pain

September 28, 2025



Today we're learning to see **how human pain can reveal God's plan**. Cuz nothing gets our attention like a little *discomfort* – so, if God's *actually* in control, and He *actually* does love us – the *adversity* He *allows* must have a *purpose* that *somehow*, outweighs *all* of our earthly *agony*. And *if* that's *true*, then we should ask the question He's urging us to ask: **What's our pain for?**



Cuz I'll tell you right now, **pain has a purpose and we're meant to find that purpose**. Cuz God does love us and He *wouldn't* allow us to experience *one* second of hurt if it *wasn't* absolutely necessary!



For [God] does not *willingly* bring *affliction* or *grief* to anyone. – Lamentations 3:33 NIV

But He *does* bring it when He *has to* – the same way you'd pull *your* child's arm out of its socket if *you* saw them walk in front of a *bus*! Cuz



Your Father in Heaven is **[also]** not willing that any of these little ones **[of His]** should perish. – Matthew 18:14 NIV



Remember, **real love isn't giving each other what we want, it's giving what we need** – and God knows that *sometimes* He *needs* to break an arm to save a *life*. So, when we all start to feel *personally afflicted* by a nation that feels *morally conflicted* – our *Christian* response ought to start with a *trusting* question of *our pain's* purpose and *not* a *doubting* question of the *goodness* in God's plan. Again – **we gotta cry out and not lash out!** Cuz

We **[should already]** know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called *according to His purpose*. – Romans 8:28 NKJ

And to unpack *that*, let me ask you a question: are sandwiches *good*? Yeah! You ever have a club sandwich with thick *bacon*, fresh *avocado*, and heirloom *tomatoes*?! It might be one of the *great pleasures* of *human life* – so, I'd say they're *pretty good*! But – let me ask you *this*: are sandwiches *good* at hammering *nails* into wood? No – *then*, sandwiches are *bad*.

Cuz it's all about *purpose*! And **misuse creates misery**. If we *don't* see the created *purpose* something is *supposed* to serve – we *won't* experience the *good* it has to *offer*. Instead, we'll be *frustrated* at its *failure* to function the way *we're* trying to use it! Which means, **to judge anything's goodness, you have to know what it's FOR**. And in the same way we'll *miss out* on all the *good* in sandwiches if we believe they're meant *for hammering* and not *for hunger* – **we'll miss out on all the good in pain if we believe it's meant for earthly agony and not for eternal empowerment**. And as Paul just explained, if we *aren't* focused on *finding* the *good*, we're *not seeing* things the way a God-loving follower of Christ is *supposed* to; and we're *not* recognizing how *privileged* we are to have access to *that perspective* of *higher purpose* in a world that is literally *dying* for someone to *share that hope*!

Unfortunately, **a lot of us are more concerned with earthly accountability than eternal implications.** We argue for *judgment, justice, or vengeance* from fellow citizens of a *broken world* – when Scripture says *dysfunction, disparity, and discomfort* are what we should expect once our world lost sight of God’s *sustaining love*. So, before you *blame anybody else* in some *inflammatory social media post* or *retaliatory outburst of accusation* – *admit and accept your part* in the human *sin* that cut us *all off* from *perfect harmony and made pain*. Cuz, until we live *just like Jesus*, we should know *we’re all still missing* the message behind all the *brokenness*. And to *change* how we *hear*, **our focus must be on why we’re hurting and not who hurt us;** cuz God only *brings the pain* if there’s a *life-or-death lesson to learn!*



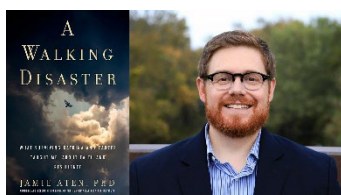
It’s a lot like the story of the *bird* and the *lumberjack*. Y’see, this *logger* goes to mark all the trees to be *cut down* the next day and comes across this little *mama bird* *trying* to build a *nest* in one of the trees he’s marking. And knowing that she’s *unaware* of her mistake, his *compassion* kicks in, he spins his axe around, and *thumps* the tree until everything falls out and *she* flies away. But seeing that she started *again* in another *marked* tree, the *lumberjack* *follows* and knocks things down *again*. And after chasing her through a *dozen* different trees, the *bird* – who’s *gotta* be thinking, “Well, that *proves it*, *lumberjacks* are *jerks!*” – finally flies up to a *rock ledge* where, *at last*, she could *nest in peace!* Cuz the *moral* of the story is, **we can’t judge what we don’t understand!** And furthermore, **we’re all up a tree until we build on the Rock!**

So, **we gotta stop acting and reacting to what our earthly eyes tell us,** cuz we *can’t* seem to see that **every tree in this world is coming down!** And since it’s *already* falling apart, expecting *justice, harmony, peace,* or *perfection* from a place *defined* by its *entropy*, is *dangerous* because it can keep us *clinging* to a *shallow* perception of *this world’s stability*.

And if we can’t see *ourselves* making *that* mistake, it’s actually incredibly *kind* and *loving* to shake our *trees* until we change our *ways*. Cuz with *each* adversity, we’re being *prompted* to ponder, **“What am I missing?”** And that’s *the* key question we need to ask, cuz *despite* how sure every *opinionated* earthling is that *they’ve* got the answers that would set everyone *else* straight:

There is a way that *appears* to be right, but in the end it leads to death. – Proverbs 14:12 NIV

Only the *lumberjack* knows the *real* reason *he* shook the tree – and **only God knows why He shakes our lives.** All we know is, **it’s wiser to use the pain to check our perspective than to challenge God.** Cuz, **life isn’t about questioning God, it’s about God questioning us** – since *our* hearts need constant inspections to *root out* the *bad judgment* distracting us from the *good of God*. Cuz, *like the bird*, we can mistake *kindness* for *cruelty* and *protection* for *pain* – when we *rely* on our *shallow, earthly eyes*.



But nothing *shakes up* our perspective like *losing control* of our life – and nothing *robs* us of *control* like a little *unexpected pain* and *affliction*. And like lots of us, that’s what Jamie Aten learned when he got diagnosed with *cancer*. So after a long recovery, he began to *research* how our *response* to trauma *changes* our *perspective* on pain.



And he eventually concluded that the *best* way to tackle any *affliction* was to **“make meaning of your experience.”** But – in studying disaster survivors, he found *two* ways that *believers* did this: one group believed God was *punishing* them and *another* believed God *saved* them. And *among* them, he learned *affliction* was much worse for the **“I’m punished”** people and easier for the **“I’m saved”** group. Cuz in the end, those looking for the *positive* purpose *found* it faster than the ones seeking a reason for God’s *wrath*. Like the one man they met who had his roof blown off by a storm but offered this optimism: **“Sometimes you have to lose the roof to see the stars.”**

We may not get to choose *whether* hard things happen – but we *do* get to choose how we see it. And although we *all* ask **“What’s God using all this pain for?”** to make *sense* of our *suffering* – few of us *want* to see the answer we already know; ***it’s all working together for good.***

[But,] Our light and momentary troubles *are achieving* for us an eternal *glory* that *far outweighs* them *all*. So we [gotta learn to] fix our eyes *not* on what is *seen*, but on what is *unseen*, since what is *seen* is *temporary*, but what is *unseen* is *eternal*. – 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV

But *no one* said it’d *feel easy*. For instance, a single *dad* who’d been searching for a *church* started coming to *His Place* over a year ago and I *loved* this guy! Cuz *every* conversation was a joyful chat about what *God* was doing and how *this church* was part of it. And just a few weeks ago he started a *new job* that I was so *excited* for him to have – cuz I *loved* the *employers* too. So, you can imagine my *shock* when the *employer* called me the *week before last* to say, he’d just *died* without warning. *It knocked. Me. Out.* And when I was asked to *officiate* his *funeral*, I gotta say, I was *struggling* to see *anything* good at work. And it wasn’t until the *service* itself, that the *good* became *obvious*: his death didn’t *weaken* anyone, it *grew* everyone’s strength. Their *convictions*, their *love*, and their *faith* in Jesus was *staggering*. And all that *eternal* good easily *outweighed* the loss of one *temporary*, physical body. But we *can’t* do that kind of *math* until we have that kind of *perspective*. And *that* takes *faith*.



Which is why **the Christian life *isn’t* comfortable, but it is valuable.** Because it’s lovingly *designed* to rock our boats with *challenges* and *opportunities* that lead us to a *perspective* that *sees* the *purpose* behind all the *painful* problems of an *imperfect* world. And shows that we actually *need* those *storms* to reveal our spiritual *weakness* and *where* we’re living in conflict with *God*, *others*, and our true *self*. Cuz before the full-blown *thunderstorm*, our lives can be full of a *low-level* *frustration*, *irritation*, and *depression* that grows into our new *normal*. And as we *accept* it on the path of *least resistance*, we slip into the **trance of the tolerable** – where we start to see *stagnate seas* as the *goal* – cuz we’re *worried* that we’ll make more *waves* if we *rock* the *boat*. But aiming for *comfortable* over *valuable* means *ignoring* the fact that **avoiding affliction leaves us lost at sea.** So, at some point, a *loving* *God* *has* to snap us out of it – cuz even if we ignore all the *chronic* aches and pains of *life*, we *can’t* look past what makes all our worries *real*; *death*.

And thank God for death cuz **we need something to shake us, wake us, and make us choose change.** And if we *won't* invite God on board to rock our boat, He'll turn up the *intensity* to *kill* the *comfort* that breeds *apathy, dishonesty, and self-sufficiency*. Cuz God loves us *too much* to let us live with the *spiritual stagnation* that *smothers* our soul. And He'll do *whatever* it takes to get *His kids home*:

For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves ... They reel to and fro ... and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, [because *that's* what it takes to break the trance of the tolerable] and [only after that] He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. [and] Then they are glad because they are quiet and [that's how the bad weather can make faith better cuz that's when] ... they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. – Psalm 107: 25, 27-30, 43 NKJ



You've probably heard it said: **God comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable, right?** Well, I'm thinking we *should* say, **God disturbs the comfortable so the disturbed will seek His comfort!** Cuz God *uses* our pain to drive *each* of us to the *crucial* decision that will *define* our *perception* and *direct* our *lives*: **Do you want truth, even if it's uncomfortable; or comfort, even if it's untrue?**

Cuz it sure would be *comforting* to believe that our *faith* will *protect* us from all the *pain* and *suffering* in this world – or that *God* will *stop* every *unjust bullet* before it delivers *devastation* – but the *uncomfortable* truth is, **pain is a big part of God's plan to bring us home.** It's the silent reminder that *separation* from our Savior *stings*; and it's the *unexpected* tool to see God's good. Cuz **being carried through pain is the best way to see love.** So, even if they hurt us, if we want *our enemies* to join *our side*, you gotta carry them through *their* pain to show *them* God's love.

[So, as hard as it is,] Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the *proper* time [which is *not now on earth*] we will reap a harvest *if we do not give up*. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people – Galatians 6:9-10 NIV

Listen, we gotta *do good* to *all people*, cuz *all* people are experiencing *pain* – and **all that pain is an opportunity to make God's love visible; so who's gonna show it?!** Cuz regardless of your personal *political* solutions, your *moral* integrity, or your *spiritual* maturity – **evil wins when good men do nothing... good!** And God saved *you* to save *others* – *not* to *judge* them! So stop *blaming, shaming, and punishing* others trying to cope *without hope* – and start *showing* them *God's good*! Cuz in case you haven't seen it – all this escalating *anger, injustice, oppression, and depression* – has produced exponential growth in *Christian conversation, prayer, fellowship, and forgiveness*. Cuz *God is good, He's in control, and He's willing* to allow all these *temporary* troubles to save all our *eternal* lives!

So, here's the bottom line, **the same pain that tears us apart can pull us together.** We just have to be *unified* in our *perspective* to *share* in its *purpose*. But there's a whole *group* who still *haven't seen* what all *their* pain is *for*! They *don't see* that they're trying to use a *sandwich* as a *hammer*, they *don't see* that the *lumberjack* is trying to *save* them, they *don't see* they gotta *lose* their *roof* to see the *stars*, they *don't see* they're in a *trance* of the *tolerable*, they *don't see* that *God's love* is the *only* thing that can *carry them home*, and they *don't see* how *that's* the *ultimate purpose* behind all of *their* pain. But if you know *God* – *you do*. And you know that you're *called* to *show them*. So *let's do it*.