

Session 4, Part 6:

Pray the Word: Paul prayed for the church: “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-5a).

Hear the Word: Just as James encouraged us to look to the prophets of old (James 5:10), Paul encourages us to follow his example and the example of other believers who are walking in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 3:17, 1:27). First, let’s look at Paul’s response to suffering and then we will learn from the example of the church of Thessalonica.

1. The Lord said of Paul, “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” (Acts 9:16) and, oh, did Paul suffer. In Session 1 we studied briefly some of Paul’s sufferings. You may want to go back to Session 1, Part 6 and review what you learned there before continuing with this lesson.
2. How did Paul respond in suffering? Read 1 Corinthians 4:11-13. In the chart below, list the afflictions Paul and his companions experienced in left column and list their response to those afflictions in the right column. Fair warning: this passage won’t fit all neat and tidy in corresponding boxes—but then again, when has our suffering ever been neat and tidy and easily organized?

Affliction	Response

3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 and 16. (You may want to go ahead and read 4:4-16 for context, however we will be looking at this passage again in a future session.)

We are afflicted in every way, but _____ (4:8)

Perplexed, but _____ (4:8)

Persecuted, but _____ (4:9)

Struck down, but _____ (4:9)

So we do not lose _____

_____ (4:16)

4. Read Philippians 3:12-16. Pay attention to the verbs in these verses (the actions). What is it he says he does?

5. What's the secret? How did Paul respond thus in suffering? Read Philippians 4:11-14. How did Paul remain content in any circumstances?

6. Now let's look briefly at the example given to us by the church in Thessalonica. The believers of Thessalonica had faith which was growing abundantly and their love for each other was increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 and then answer the questions.

- a. Did the Thessalonian church suffer? If so what? (1:4)

b. For what were they suffering? (1:5)

c. How did they respond in all of their suffering? (1:4)

Apply the Word: I Press On (Philippians 3:12-16)! Who could fail to be stirred by Paul’s resounding testimony in Philippians 3:12-16? But he takes it even further. Directly afterward in verse seventeen he says, “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Philippians 3:17). In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he writes, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Let us be obedient to the Word. Read back over the responses to suffering you have seen today. Make a bullet point list of them. Where applicable, contrast those responses with your own of which you need to repent. In the final blank, write any changes which you are going to make in the way you respond to suffering.

Responses Learned in Scripture /	What I Currently Do	→	Actionable Changes
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____
• _____ / _____	_____	→	_____

Dearest Believer, Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. (Philippians 3:20-4:1)

Session 4, Part 7:

Pray the Word: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Hear the Word: We have looked at both Old and New Testament examples of steadfast suffering. Now let’s look to the example of perfect suffering (1 Peter 2:21-22), the founder and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). In Session 1 we learned about what Christ suffered. Today, we want to focus on how he responded. What did Jesus do in his suffering? Read each of the following passages. Remember what we have learned in Session 3-4 regarding our response to suffering and identify each instance of Jesus worshipping God, submitting to God, trusting God, rejecting sin, and remaining steadfast.

1. John 17:4-5

2. Matthew 26:39-44

3. Philippians 2:8

4. Isaiah 53:7-11

5. John 19:28-30.

- c. Because why? (2:21)
 - d. Christ left us an example of suffering, so that you would what? (2:21)
 - e. What did Jesus not do? (2:22-23a)
 - f. But instead, what did Jesus do? (2:23b-24a)
 - g. Why did Jesus do all this? (look at 2:21 and 2:24)
2. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Then answer the questions using the words of Scripture. (We look more at Hebrews 12 in the sessions to come, today just focus on verses 1-3.)
- a. First, look back to Hebrews chapter 11. What is it that the author of Hebrews had just done? What is the content of Hebrews chapter 11?
 - b. How does Hebrews chapter 12 begin? (12:1a)

c. What are we instructed to do? (12:1-3).

Let us _____ (12:1)

Let us _____ (12:1)

Looking to _____ (12:2)

Consider _____ (12:3)

d. Jesus is the _____ and _____ of our faith (12:2)

e. What did Jesus do? (12:2-3)

f. Why did Jesus endure the cross according to verse two? (12:2)

g. What is the result of looking to Jesus and considering him? (12:3)

h. So, bring it full circle. How do we not grow weary or fainthearted?

Apply the Word: Now put Hebrews 12:2-3 into practice and “consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (Hebrews 12:3). Look at all you have learned in parts seven and eight. What did Jesus do in his suffering? Identify and dwell on each instance of Jesus worshipping God, submitting to God, trusting God, not sinning, and remaining steadfast.

Session 4, Part 9:

Pray the Word: LORD, your way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; you are a shield for all those who take refuge in You. For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?— the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. You made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. (Psalm 18:30-33) “The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation” (Psalm 18:46).

Hear the Word: Because of Christ’s suffering for us, we now have the hope of heaven before us. What does that mean for us in our suffering? How does Christ in our hearts and eternity with him, impact the way we respond to suffering? Read each of the following passages and then answer the questions?

1. Read Matthew 10:16-33.
 - a. Here Jesus warns that we are being sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves, but what are we told to be? (Matthew 10:16)
 - b. He tells us we will delivered to courts and persecuted for his sake. But according to 10:19 we are not to be what? Why? (Matthew 10:19-20)
 - c. He tells us we will be hated for his name sake, but who will be saved? (Matthew 10:22)
 - d. According to 10:26, 28, and 31 what are we not to do?

- e. But rather we are to fear God. According to Matthew 10:29-32 what does God do? What does Jesus do?

2. Read Matthew 6:25-34.

- a. Matthew 6:25 begins by saying, "Therefore I tell you." Who is the "I?" Read Matthew 4:23-5:1 to determine who is speaking in this passage.

- b. Read Matthew 6:25-34 again and highlight each of the instructions.

- c. The first instruction of this passage is in verse 25. What are the two stressors the Lord mentions in this verse? Yes, I realize it may seem like there are three, but read it again, the three (food, drink, and clothing) are merely appendages to the two great stressors Jesus is drawing attention to. Write them below.

1. _____

2. _____

- d. Read verses 26-30 again. What two examples of nature does Jesus tell us to look at and learn from?

1. _____

2. _____

- e. Now use a word study book or app to look up the Greek definitions of the words "life" and "body" as used in Matthew chapter six. (If you have never done a word study before then you can find further resources on my website Surpassing-Worth.com or in my book *Holding Fast the Word of Life*). Write your observations below.

i. Life:

ii. Body:

- f. In this passage Jesus asks a series of rhetorical questions. Sometimes we are reading so quickly that we don't stop to process the powerful answers behind these questions. I have written each question out for you. Write the answers and say them aloud.
- i. "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (Matthew 6:25b)
 - ii. Are you not of more value than [the birds]? (Matthew 6:26b)
 - iii. "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matthew 6:27)
 - iv. "And why are you anxious about clothing ... if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you"? (Matthew 6:28a and 30a)
- g. What is it that God does for the birds? (Matthew 6:26)
- h. What is it that God does for the lilies? (Matthew 6:29-30)
- i. What does Jesus point to as the root of their anxiety in verse 30?
- j. Read Matthew 6:25-34 again and underline every use of the word "therefore."

- k. Jesus Repeats his instruction three times, first in verse 25, then in verse 31, and finally in verse 34. Each time he begins with “therefore, do not be...” Underline each of these “do not” instructions in your text (be careful not to underline more than the actual instruction).
- l. Read Matthew 6:25-34 again. This time circle each use of the word “but.”
- m. The word “but” signifies contrast. After telling them what not to do, he now shows them what to do. Write the “Do” instructions in the space below
- n. To break this down even further, I have included a chart from my study notes. In the first column of the chart, I wrote the “do-not” instructions, in the second column I write the reasons why given in the text, and in the last column wrote how to follow the instruction or what is it that we are to be doing instead? Read over this chart.

Instruction (Do Not)	Why?	How? (Do)
“do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.” (6:25a)	“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (6:25b) “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (6:27) “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you” (6:30a)	“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (6:26) “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (6:28b-29)
“do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’” (6:31)	“For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” (6:32)	“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (6:33)
“do not be anxious about tomorrow” (6:34a)	“for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.” (6:34b)	“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (6:34b) Focus on today

Apply the Word: Philippians 4:4-6 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” What are you feeling anxious about today? Tell God about it, ask him for what you need with thanksgiving, “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard you hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Session 4, Part 10:

Pray the Word: Dear God, May we be filled with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy, fully pleasing to you: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of you; being strengthened with all power, according to your glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy. We give thanks to you. Thank you for qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light and delivering us from the domain of darkness and transferring us to the kingdom of your beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Amen. (Colossians 1:9-14)

Hear the Word: What does endurance look like? Is Christian suffering simply resigned acceptance? Does endurance mean we grin and bear it? Does it give us an excuse to pull up the covers and hide until it’s over?

1. Read the following passages. In the first column list everything the passage calls you to do (the instructions). In the second column, list any promises given (the outcomes of steadfast suffering).

	The Instructions	The Outcomes
James 1:2-4		

1 Peter 4:12-19		
Romans 5:3-4		
Galatians 6:9-10		

2. What is the result of patient endurance in suffering? We will look at God's purposes in our sufferings in the next session. However, I don't want to leave this session without touching briefly on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Read it. According to the passage, what do you experience when you patiently endure suffering? It's a promise, Loved of the Lord.

Apply the Word: *Steadfast* is not synonymous with *stoic*. Being patient and steadfast does not mean there will be no nights filled with tears. God does not want you to bottle up your tears, just tough it out, or put on a brave face. Jesus wept (John 11:35) and Jesus knew no sin (1 Peter 2:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). David drenched his bed with his tears (Psalm 6:6) and David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Job tore his robes and shaved his head (Job 1:20) and Job did not sin in his response (Job 1:22). Your tears matter to God. He is near you, Brokenhearted One (Psalm 34:18). In fact, David writes of God, "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8).

But steadfastness does mean that even in the worst of the pain, we are resting on our rock of refuge (Psalm 71:3). We rejoice in the Lord always even in our suffering (Philippians 4:4) because we know the Lord is at hand. We are not anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we let our requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guards our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7). We know what it is to suffer need, but we have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation: We can do all this through Christ who gives us strength. (Philippians 4:12-13). So, we don't lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:16). We press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). We do what is right without fearing anything that is frightening (1 Peter 3:6) and we do not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9).

We will discuss the end of our suffering in a future session, but I don't want to leave this session without this last word of encouragement. Who are those who will remain steadfast? James 1:12 says "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." Those who remain steadfast receive the crown of life, and God has promised the crown of life to those who love him. Who are those who love God? John tells us to love one another for "love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7b). And Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). "Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4). Therefore, remaining steadfast is a guaranteed condition for those who are his. However, we have nothing

to boast about. We are saved by grace through faith and this is not our own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yes, in all these things we are more than conquerors, but it is through him who loved us (Romans 8:37). Even our love for him does not originate from us. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.” “Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). All glory be to God.

I would love to know you are doing the study! Send me an email by going to the contact page of www.Surpassing-Worth.com. If this study has blessed your life, please share it with a friend.

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