

## Why Suffering Should Lead to Worship

In this series of articles from John 6:16-21, we're seeking to gain answers to the question, "Why does God allow suffering in the lives of his people?" The apostle Paul helps us in answering this question—at least in part—by connecting the dots from suffering to Spiritual maturity. "More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5; see also James 1:2-4) This text gives us some much needed help in teaching us how we should *respond* in times of suffering. As we're nearing the end of this series we've looked at Jesus' love for his disciples under the heading:

### —Savior's Love

This larger section of the passage I have broken down to two smaller sections thus far. We looked first at *watching*. Jesus has not sent his disciples out in the boat just to let them fend for themselves. He is always watching over his disciples. This is an important truth that we need to draw strength from and rest in during our times of suffering. Secondly, along with *watching*, we looked at *warning*. We saw in some detail in Matthew's gospel that Peter received a warning in the form of a rebuke for failing to fully trust Jesus in his time of need. Mark, in his recording of this same night at sea, tells us that the disciples, as a group, failed to fully trust Jesus because, "their hearts were hardened." (Mk. 6:52) Mark goes even further by sharing with us why their hearts were hardened. It was because "they didn't understand about the loaves." The disciples had failed to deeply ponder the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000. This is a warning to us as well. Clearly, our hearts can be hardened when we either ignore completely or marginalize what the Scriptures teach us about Jesus—who he is and what he came to accomplish for his people. Christ's warnings in scripture are never disconnected from his love. In fact, his warnings are a *crucial aspect* of his love. Since it's true that Jesus is always watching and when it's needed he's warning us, what should our response be? Lastly, I want to go from watching and warning to our third and final smaller section:

### —Worshipping

Johns' recording of the events at this point is still minimal. Jesus is "taken into the boat and the boat was immediately at the land to which they were going." (John 6:21) Interestingly, both Matthew and Mark tell us that something miraculous happened. Mark writes, "And he got into the boat with them, and *the wind ceased*. And they were utterly astounded....." When the disciples get a glimpse of Jesus, e.g., his power over creation; when their hearts—at least for the moment—are no longer hardened and distracted by all that's going on around them; this, naturally, leads them to worship Jesus.

Listen to these words from Matthew. "And when he got into the boat, *the wind ceased*. And those in the boat worshiped him saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'" When we embrace that fact that Christians are in Jesus' loving arms always; when we live as if we *truly believe* he loves us and will take care of us *and our covenant children*; this will always bring about a desire for worship. Like the disciples, our faith will ebb and flow, but as we seek, by grace, to grow in our knowledge of God, as well as growing in our faith, the outcome cannot help but bring about a greater trust in and worship of our awesome Savior! Jesus intends, by his word and Spirit, to mature us in our Christian faith and one important way that we grow is by responding to the suffering and trials that we encounter in life in a way that honors God. We'll never do this perfectly, but as we grow in our trust of Jesus, by his grace, we'll also grow in our likeness to him. Lastly, it's important to remember that there will be many times when we'll fail. And yet, our rest is not in our ability to always do things the right way. We'll never *always* do things the right way. Our rest is in the only one—the Lord Jesus Christ—who always obeyed perfectly. Rest in Jesus! Ask him to help you trust in him daily, as you seek to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois