



Links Players

Suffering - Depending on Him

...we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9, ESV)

Ben Hogan famously quipped, "This is a game of misses. The guy who misses the best is going to win." I am quite sure he had fewer misses than the rest of us. I also assume he handled his misses better than most.

When Bobby Jones was asked about suffering from a debilitating disease, he responded, "Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots and good breaks from bad shots— but you have to play the ball as it lies."

Your golf experiences are probably similar to mine. In particular, we are all well aware of the annoying commentary golfers express after mishitting a shot or finding their ball in an awful lie.

We learn a ton about ourselves and others as we face the many challenges that confront us in a round of golf: a buried lie under the lip of a bunker, that last limb that knocks the ball straight down, or that 180-degree lip out. How we handle a "bad bounce" or a "flyer" that airmailed the green tells us about our true selves.

So, too, in life outside the ropes. How we react to the tough seasons of life usually reveals a great deal about who we are, not who we want to be or how others perceive us, but our true character.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the infamous atheist, once wrote, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." That certainly can be true, but only if the one suffering responds to the adverse circumstances correctly.

As Americans, we have been taught from our youth to be "self-reliant." I suppose it's normal to dig deep into our past, various skill sets, and previous experiences to face the challenges that confront us.

Yet, for those who follow Christ, we must learn to go deeper than

depending on ourselves for the strength to endure or triumph in the battle; we must learn to rely on the risen Christ for the faith and resolve to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

Many times in seasons of suffering, we have the gnawing suspicion that we won't make it, that this is more than we can bear, or that this is "a bridge too far."

Of all the many things we learn through the battles we face in this life, Paul reminds us that these "valleys" teach us to "...rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead."

Regardless of how the Father handles your particular battle, know this: you can depend on him to grant you the grace needed to face every battle, be near you in every trial, and use every difficulty for your good.

Prayer: Lord! Show us how to "lean in" and depend on you in life's battles.

READING - 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

1. Before meeting with your Links Fellowships, set aside some time for self-reflection on how you handle mishits, bad lies, and poor performance on the golf course. Be prepared to discuss this with your friends.

2. After reading 2 Corinthians 1: 3-11, list the ways Paul encourages us to think about and navigate suffering.

3. Application: What practical ways can we move away from self-reliance and toward relying on God? Discuss!
