



Links Players

Suffering - Embracing Grief and Sorrow

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort too. (2 Corinthians 1: 3-, ESV)

No one sets out to play poorly. I've never met anyone who stood on the first tee and hoped for a miserable round. On the other hand, I've seen plenty of golfers who, after finishing a round, slam their clubs in the trunk and mutter something like, "This is a stupid game."

After a miserable round, I once observed a good friend, many years ago now, place his golf bag in the middle of the club parking lot and run over those misbehaving instruments of double bogeys at what looked like forty miles per hour. He never looked back! True story!

I vividly remember watching Colin Montgomery drive away from Congressional C.C. after finishing second to "The Big Easy" in the 1997 U.S. Open. The look on his face was pure grief. Missing by a shot, Montgomery drove away inconsolably.

There is no escaping it! If we leave the range and go into the great unknown of a round of golf, all sorts of disappointments are possible—a butter fade on the outward half turns into a pull hook on the inward half. Making the turn four under convinces you, "Today I am going low," only to wind up four over on the back.

So, what do we do when the "wheels come off" in a round? Pout? Murmur? Quit? Curse? Run over our clubs with the car? Or, as another old friend once did, throw your clubs in a lake and never return to retrieve those insubordinate instruments of torture.

Suffering, disappointment, and sorrow come to us all, on and off the course. The joys of golf are indeed wonderful. Holing out on a par four from the middle of the fairway is delightful. Blading it from the bunker out of bounds is inexpressibly depressing. What to do?

In golf, we can choose to learn from a bad swing or an awful round. In life, we can embrace our sorrows, learn what Christ desires to teach us, grieve in our pain, and grow more into the likeness of "...a man of sorrows and [one] acquainted with grief..." (Isaiah 53:3).

God never wastes our suffering. Of course, that requires we follow him in the obedience of faith. Too many followers of Christ Jesus never realize God's intentions through suffering, either because they become embittered by their circumstances or by refusing to embrace their suffering with deeply felt grief. Consequently, they become spiritually stuck.

As C. S. Lewis once insightfully observed, "We can ignore pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Prayer: Jesus! Confirm in our hearts that suffering is never wasted for the one who trusts you through it all.

READING - Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

1. How do you handle a disappointing round? How much of your identity is tied to how well or poorly you play? Discuss!

2. What do we learn about our Savior through his suffering as we ponder Isaiah 53? What does Paul mean when he says, "We share in Christ's suffering?"

3. Application: Discuss what you've learned about Jesus and yourself in a particular season of suffering.
