

Persevering in the Pain

Selected Scriptures

25 Oct 09

We can take our Bibles and open this morning to Psalm 34. Psalm 34 and I want to begin by just reading verse 19. Psalm 34 verse 19. As a pastor my primary responsibility is really clear in the scripture and that is to feed the church of God from the truth of the word of God. And you know we do that, we take that seriously here. And, generally we do that in a systematic way, teaching through a book of the Bible like we have been. We've been going through the gospel of Matthew on Sunday mornings and First Thessalonians on Sunday nights. But from time to time, there arises a need to address a particular topic or particular issue directly from the scripture believing that that is a timely thing to do. And, we did that last Sunday night for those of that were here you know we took a little departure from First Thessalonians and did a little something special last Sunday night. And we want to continue along that same line with some things today. But I think it would be helpful and timely for us to look at, so let's begin by just reading this verse, Psalm 34 verse 19, which says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

Let's pray. Father, as we come to Your word today we are thankful that we have a revelation from You. We're thankful that we have Your word to turn to the address the issues that we face in everyday life. And we can be confident that we have a sure word from You, a powerful word, a transforming word, a practical word that would direct us and help us and encourage us and strengthen us. We pray Lord as we study Your word this morning and particularly as we look at the issue of physical pain in our own lives that You would direct us and teach us, minister to us. For we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Earlier this year, many Christians took note of the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. John Calvin was a man greatly used by God as a leader in a time that's known historically as the Reformation. He had a massive impact on the church and the world of his day, which was the mid-1500's. You may be familiar with some of the works of John Calvin. You might be familiar with his monumental work, The Institutes of the Christian Religion. You might be familiar with his commentaries on the Bible. You might have read books of his sermons. You might have read books of his lectures because he also taught theology. You might have read some of the tracts that he prepared or the letters that he wrote. We have over 1200 of those letters that John Calvin wrote. The production of that one man was absolutely phenomenal. Not only did he do all those things that I just mentioned, but he had the day to day pastoral work of visiting people, counseling people, taking care of administrative responsibilities, Plus where he lived in Geneva at the time he also was involved in civic and diplomatic duties. Absolutely phenomenal amount of output from this one man. We're still impacted by what he did today. And we thank God and we give God glory for raising up men like John Calvin for all that the church has benefited from men, instruments like him that God used to do great things. And you might be somewhat aware of the life and work of John Calvin, I don't think that's an unfamiliar name to most of you.

But what you might not know makes the output and impact of his life even more impressive. John Calvin was a man who experienced great physical pain and intense physical suffering. He suffered, let me just begin the list of things that he suffered from. He suffered from a very weak stomach. He had frequent stomach ailments. Some of you are saying, I hear you John. I feel you. But his were so severe that consequently he often only ate one meal a day. But that turned out to be okay because that also seemed to help with the frequent migraine headaches that he suffered from. He also suffered from a kind of malarial fever that would come and go. He had gout which isn't a word you hear much about today but it's a condition that's a joint inflammation. Painful joint inflammation. He had colic which often would result in him spitting up blood. Here's a fun one. He suffered from extremely painful hemorrhoids. So he had a weak stomach, migraine headaches, malarial type fever that came and went, gout, colic, hemorrhoids, he even passed kidney stones. John Calvin knew severe and at times excruciating physical pain on a regular basis in his life.

John Calvin was married. His wife was pregnant three times during the course of their marriage. First pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. The next pregnancy resulted in a child who died at birth. The third pregnancy produced a child who died at two weeks old. Calvin's wife, her name was Idelette, was ill throughout their married life. Eventually she died of tuberculosis. They were only married nine years.

So even as a choice servant of God, one who was greatly used by God, John Calvin was a man who was deeply afflicted. And we're only talking about a part of the affliction that he suffered, thy physical and family part of it. We're not even going to be going to talk about the affliction he suffered because of persecution and opposition to his ministry. He was a man who knew extreme affliction. The point that I'm making is that pain and grief, they're a normal part of life. Pain and grief are a normal experience in life, even for God's people. Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." They come in all kinds of ways, but they are many. And just to highlight this a little further, turn over to Psalm 88. Psalm 88. I guarantee you, this is not your favorite Psalm. I guarantee you, this is not a Psalm you spend much time meditating upon. It's been called the saddest Psalm because there's no resolution. The Psalmist talks about the problems that he's facing which isn't uncommon in the Psalms, but all the other Psalms they come to some kind of resolution. They find some hope in God. They find some answer, some strength. Not in Psalm 88. And, in a way we can be thankful that there is a Psalm like this. But, we can also I think be thankful there is only one Psalm like this. Let me read it for you. It says, "Oh Lord, the God of my salvation, I have cried out by day and in the night before You. Let my prayer come before You, incline Your ear to my cry! For my soul has had enough troubles, and my life has drawn near to Sheol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man without strength, forsaken among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and they are cut off from Your hand. You have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths. Your wrath has rested upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. You have removed my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an object of loathing to them; I am shut up and cannot go out. My eye has wasted away because of affliction; I have called upon You every day, O Lord; I have spread out my hands to You. Will You perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise You? Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But I, O

Lord, have cried out to You for help, and in the morning my prayer comes before You. O Lord, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me? I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on; I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome. Your burning anger has passed over me; Your terrors have destroyed me. They have surrounded me like water all day long; they have encompassed me altogether. You have removed lover and friend far from me; my acquaintances are in darkness.”

Now we’re not going to go into a lot of detail, but you can see that this is a testimony of a believer who experienced lifelong pain from his youth, he says. This is a person who experienced one disappointment after another. And the Psalm ends, like I said, with no resolution. It ends in darkness. Literally that last line reads, “My acquaintances are darkness.” I’m living in the dark. The Psalmist never got an answer for why he suffered. Now this Psalmist’s here to witness to the possibility that a believer can experience unrelieved suffering and pain. And this was a believer, we know he was. It was Heman the Ezrahite. A guy who served in the temple but yet he experienced a life of pain and disappointment.

Pain is a real and normal part of life in this world. And, I think it’s an issue that we need to look at because we’ve experienced a lot of physical pain in our fellowship. I started to make a list. I work my way from the top down, headaches, neck pains, problems with shoulders, elbows, wrists, backs, knees, feet, and those are just my own aches and pains! Some of the rest of you might be experiencing some of these things too. We’ve had to deal with people with cancer, diabetes, hepatitis, high blood pressure, heart illnesses, a number of surgeries and then recovery from those surgeries. We’ve had people who have had to deal, even as Wes Brown today, with death in their family. And you know what, we are absolutely normal in this regard. Absolutely normal. But what makes it difficult to deal with as people living in our country, is that through medicine and wealth we do everything we can to avoid any kind of pain. And that’s a major effort in our country. Pain in our culture is seen as something that’s abnormal. It’s seen as an intrusion. You have a right to a pain-free life. And our government is going to make sure you enjoy it.

In our fast-paced culture we want easy answers. We want pain, any pain that we experience to be dealt with quickly and decisively. I mean, if I experience pain we should have an answer for it, we should have something I can do about it, and it should be gone by tomorrow. That’s the way we think in our society. I think we could benefit greatly by taking the time to think about it Biblically. That’s what we’re going to do today. Now, we’re not going to talk about how to minister to those who are hurting. That’s obviously an important subject, the Bible says a lot about that. I want to talk about how do you deal with it when you’re the one in pain. And if you’re not the one in pain today, stick around, you will be. If we’re going to really persevere in the pain, we need God’s wisdom because pain is normal. And here’s the fact, God often allows us to experience suffering and sorrow that we would never choose for ourselves. So how do I interpret the pain in my own life? I want us to look at five truths, five things to remember as we persevere in the pain. And I’ll boil it down to five key words just to give you something to follow along with.

First word that you need to remember is cursed. As in we live in a sin-cursed world. When Adam and Eve revolted against God, death entered into creation and we are affected, not only by death, but by everything that leads up to death. Our bodies feel the effects of the curse of sin, that’s a general

condition. We're in a cursed world, we're in cursed bodies, and we see the effects. So that's just a general thing to keep in mind.

But also, we have an enemy who can bring sickness and pain into our lives. Just think of a man named Job. Read the book of Job. And see the physical suffering that Job experienced because God allowed Satan to afflict him. In fact, you may not have thought too much about that recently, and let me just read you a little bit about Job and what exactly he suffered. In Job chapter two verse seven we're told that "Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." Completely covered with these painful boils. How painful? Well, verse 13 says that when his three friends showed up to try to comfort him, all they could do was sit on the ground and remain speechless for seven days. That's how they were affected by just looking at Job. That's how bad it was. Chapter three verse 24, Job says, "For my groaning comes at the sight of food, and my cries pour out like water." Food makes him sick. The sight of food makes him sick. He's crying all the time. He's in constant, unrelenting pain. Chapter seven verse five he says, "My flesh is clothed with worms, and a crust of dirt, my skin hardens and runs." That was the result of his condition. Verse 13 of chapter seven he says, "If I say, 'My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,' then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions." What he might be talking about there is hallucinations that he might be experiencing as a result of the severe pain and the illness that's racking his body. Chapter 13 verse 28 he says, "While I am decaying like a rotten, like a garment that is moth eaten." That's what he feels like. He feels like, I'm a rotten thing that's decaying. Chapter 16 verse eight. He says, "You have shriveled me up." Again that idea of decaying, rotting, shriveling up. Here's a part of it that you might find interesting. Chapter 19 verse 17, "My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own brothers." I mean, nobody want to get close to me. I don't look good. I don't smell good. This is not good. Chapter 30 verse 17 he says, "At night it pierces my bones within me, and my gnawing pains take no rest." So you understand what he is saying. He's in pain all the time. Unrelenting, unceasing, intense pain. Chapter 30 verse 30 he says, "My skin turns black on me, and my bones burn with fever." Chapter 33 verse 21, this is how he's described. "His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones which were not seen stick out." He's experiencing dramatic weight loss. That's obvious. That happened because we live in a sin cursed world where an enemy is on the loose and in this case God gave that enemy the ability to afflict Job and that's what Job suffered.

But beyond the general curse of sin and the work of Satan, we can suffer physically because of specific sins that we commit. I can suffer physically because of my own sinful actions. If I get angry and punch the wall and break my hand, my hand is going to hurt. I am going to experience pain. And that pain is a direct result of my own sinful action. I can suffer physically because of un-Biblical responses to circumstances. I can be filled with fear and anxiety and worry and that can affect my physical well-being. We know how our emotions and our thoughts affect the way we feel. When you're all excited about something you feel it right? When you're nervous about something, you feel it. When you're filled with fear, anger, anxiety, bitterness, you feel it. It shows up in your body. I can suffer physically because of un-Biblical responses to my circumstances. And I can suffer physically because of God's chastisement for my sin. In First Corinthians 11, Paul is instructing the Corinthians regarding the taking of the Lord's Table. And particularly his concern was that they were taking it in an unworthy manner. And he said because

you are taking it in an unworthy manner, many of you are weak and sick. What he's saying there is that God is chastising them for not honoring the Lord's Table like they should and the chastisement came in the form of weakness and sickness. So don't be surprised by physical problems such as sickness, disease. Don't be surprised that your body is breaking down. We live in a sin-cursed world that's marked by death. We have an enemy who is a murderer and a destroyer. And sometimes we suffer as a result of our own sin. So remember that word cursed. We live in a sin-cursed world that's filled with pain.

Second word for you to remember is man. As in, man is not sovereign. Man, no matter how hard he tries, cannot absolutely avoid the physical pain that comes from living in this world. Can't do it. No matter how carefully you eat. No matter how much you exercise. No matter how godly you are, you cannot absolutely protect yourself from experiencing physical pain in this world. Now, does that mean it doesn't matter how I eat? No. Does it mean I don't need to exercise? No. Does it mean I should not live a godly life? No. But none of those things is going to guarantee that you are not going to experience even extreme and excruciating physical pain. Man is not sovereign. Job was the most godly man on the face of the earth. Did that prevent him from experiencing excruciating physical pain?

Not only can we not avoid physical breakdowns, but here's a news flash for you: we cannot cure everything. We cannot cure everything. Last Sunday night we looked at the lady who came to Jesus who had suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years. And we're told in Mark 5:26 that she had endured much at the hands of many physicians and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse. She spent everything she had seeking the very best medical care that they had in her day. Not only did she not get better, she got worse. Some of you are saying, I feel it. I've heard it. I've been there. In Luke's Gospel, Luke was a medical doctor. This is what Luke says about this woman. It's in Luke 8:43. It says, "She could not be healed by anyone." Couldn't be. Same thing today. We cannot cure everything. You can have symptoms with no known cause or cure. Doesn't mean that the symptoms aren't real, just means we don't know what to do. We don't know what's causing the pain, we don't know what to do to cure the pain. Now, no doctor is going to say that to you. You stumped me on this one. I have no idea. No clue what's wrong with you. That's not going to happen. They're going to categorize you in some kind of a syndrome which cleverly disguises the fact that what they are really saying is, yeah, you have stomach aches but we don't know why. Here's some things you can try that might make you feel better. We don't know the cause or the cure of every physical pain that you might suffer. And all of that serves to remind us of how frail our life is. Our life here is pretty frail. It can be taken away from us really easily and really quickly. James 4:14 says, "You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow; you are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." That's the summary of our life. We're like a vapor. We appear for a little while and it's gone. It's all over. In First Peter chapter one verse 24 and he's quoting from Isaiah 40 verse six, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off." It's here today, it's gone tomorrow. Our lives are very fragile, very frail. We live in a sin-cursed world and man is not sovereign.

Third word to remember, God. As in, God is sovereign. God is sovereign. Even in that Psalm that I read, Psalm 88, the Psalmist acknowledged that God was sovereign over his afflictions. Just to re-read a few of those verses, verse six he says, "You [God] have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places in the depths. Your wrath has rested upon me and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. You have removed my

acquaintances far from me; You have made me an object of loathing to them.” He recognizes that God is sovereign over all of these things in his life. It is God who rules over all of these things. You remember when God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and He was commissioning Moses to go back to Egypt to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, and He explained some things to Moses, showed some signs to Moses to confirm all this, and when it came right down to it Moses was a little reluctant to do this. And he gave an excuse for why he may not be the best guy for this job. In Exodus chapter four verse 10 it says, “Then Moses said to the Lord, ‘Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.’” Lord, I am just not a good communicator. I don’t think I’m the guy for the job. The Lord’s response is very instructive for us. Exodus 4:11, “The Lord said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’” The Lord there is taking responsibility for these conditions in people’s lives.

But as believers, we have a promise from God that He is sovereignly and providentially working through all of these things for our good. And, you’re familiar with the verse, “We know,” Romans 8:28, “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” He’s causing all of these things to work together for our good. Verse 29, “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.” He’s doing all these things for our good, making His people more like His Son. And He’s not just randomly doing that. It’s not like you catch a disease and God says, hmm, how can I use that? No, God knew the disease was coming. And He sent it for a reason. For your good. To make you more like Christ. It is good for us to learn to trust God’s control in our life. That’s a good thing to learn. Sometimes we learn that through affliction. We learn to trust God through the affliction that He sends our way. That’s a good thing. That’s a good thing to learn. It is a good thing to learn to be thankful even when you are uncomfortable. That’s a really good thing to learn. How are you going to learn that if you’re not uncomfortable? God is working and He can use painful experiences of this life for my good because He is sovereign. These things aren’t catching Him off guard. He is providentially orchestrating the events of your life for your good. He is sovereign. And you need to understand that as you read the Bible and as you read history that they work of God in the lives of His people sometimes involves severe and numerous afflictions. Think Job, think Calvin. The old saying is, “Those whom He royally elects, He ruthlessly perfects.” God is out for your holiness, your righteousness, to make you more like Christ. And He will ruthlessly pursue that goal in your life for your good. It’s for my good, and it’s for His glory. Did you know that disease and death can bring God glory? Let me just remind you of a couple of incidences from the Gospel of John. In John chapter nine verse one we’re told that Jesus passed by and saw a man who was blind from birth. He’s leaving the temple grounds, walks outside, there’s a man, a blind beggar, a guy who’s been blind from birth. And His disciples ask Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” They had the same theology as Job’s friends. Somebody’s suffering physically. It must be specifically due to some sin that they committed or maybe their parents committed. Jesus says in verse 3, “It was neither.” This guy isn’t blind for any of those reasons. “It was neither that this man’s sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” God caused this man to be born blind so that on this day at that time, Jesus and His disciples would go by and Jesus would open the eyes of this man born blind, something

that had never before happened in the history of the world. If you turn over to chapter 11 of John. It says, "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother was Lazarus was sick." This was a family Jesus loved, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. And we're told that Lazarus was sick. "So the sisters send word to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.'" Your friend Lazarus is sick. Verse four, "But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.'" And you know the rest of the story. They waited to go to where Lazarus was until after he had died. And he's in the tomb and Jesus calls him back to life. That sickness and that death was used to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

All sickness and death is, because He's sovereignly in charge of all of it, using it for His purposes which includes His glory. God is sovereign. All things are under His control. Sickness, disease, death, Satan, He rules over it all. And He is actively working for the good of His people and for His glory. And that may oftentimes involve your own physical pain. So remember that third word: God. He is sovereign.

Fourth word to remember, that word is please. As in, I must seek to please God. I must seek to please God. Second Corinthians chapter five verse nine says, "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." That's our ambition, to please the Lord. To please God out of a great love for Him, a great worship of Him because of what He's done for me, because of who He is and because I know Him. He saved me, He called me to Himself. I'm going to seek to please Him in everything I do. It's so easy to seek to please self when you're hurting. We need to think, I want to please God in my hurting. So, please take note of this, pleasing God is more important than getting well. Pleasing God is more important than getting well. Getting well is not the most important thing. In fact, it may not even be possible.

But if you make getting well your goal, well then you are likely to suffer more from fear and anxiety and you'll likely fall for some empty promise. We've found this way to make you feel all better. And you're going to spend money falling after that empty promise shown on an infomercial late at night with people telling you how they were miraculously cured. So many bad things can happen when I make pain relief my primary goal. To make pain relief my primary goal is to set a self-pleasing goal. Not a God-pleasing goal. And pain relief can be an all-consuming desire. John Piper you know went through cancer recently and he wrote a work called Don't Waste Your Cancer. Ten ways not to waste your cancer. I'll read you a couple of them. You're wasting your cancer if start reading more about your illness than you do God's word. You're wasting your cancer if you find more comfort in the odds of recovery than in God. Desire for pain relief affects how I perceive my pain. Because how much pain relief is going to be enough and how much am I willing to pay to get that relief? And what happens if it never comes, this relief that I am so relentlessly pursuing? Now you should go to the doctor as a good steward of the life that God has given you. And we can be thankful for all that is available to us. But if I can't get relief, I need to think Biblically about that. And I must believe that God intends to use my new condition, my current condition, so that I can even more effectively serve Him. It's for my good, it's for His glory. He's put this in my life so that I can more effectively serve Him than I could if I didn't ever have this thing. I need to seek to please Him. In Colossians 1:10 Paul says, I'm praying for you "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the

knowledge of God." I want you to be pleasing in all respects. Not just pleasing when you feel good. Pleasing Him in all respects, even when you don't feel good. Maybe because of this condition I have, I can't function like I would like to. Maybe I can't function like I used to, but I can still please God. I can please Him even when life is difficult. And I can serve Him more effectively.

How do I do that? By being responsible for doing what I can do, even when it's difficult. My goal is to please God and that is what drives me. Ephesians chapter five and verse 10, says we're "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." We talked about this verse a little bit at Man Camp. Remember guys? Carefully investigating ways to please God. Everyday it's a constant thing. I am constantly investigating how I can please God. My condition changed, I can't do what I used to do, I can't do what I would like to do, but how can I please God in this new situation? So often we think well I can't do what I used to so I can't do anything anymore. No, I just need to investigate a new way to please God that I would have never thought of before. Because God's using this for my good and His glory, I'm going to be more effective in serving Him than I was before. I need to think Biblically about this. I need to think about what's true as Philippians 4:8 tells me, and I need to remember Philippians 4:13 that says, "I can do all things through Christ how strengthens me." I can do all things. And, I need to remember that His grace is sufficient. Second Corinthians 9:8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." He's got abundant grace. It's just a matter of perspective. Ultimately illness ushers us into heaven. But to listen to some Christians talk, heaven must not be a very desirable place to go because they really don't want to go there. They'd rather stay in this sin-cursed world. What? I had a friend who was diagnosed with prostate cancer not too long ago. As he was leaving the doctor's office- I mean the diagnosis caught him completely by surprise- but as he left the doctor's office walking back to his car he thought, man this might just be my ticket out of here. I don't think he shared that view with his wife, but he was thinking for himself, hey, this may be a good deal.

Philippians 1:21, what does it say? For me to live is Christ and to die is what? [Gain] Wow, how about that? He says, I really like you Philippians, but I don't know what I would prefer whether to hand around and be with you guys or go to heaven, which he says at the end of verse 23 in Philippians one, is very much better. You Philippians, you're cool, but hey, heaven? Very much better. It's very much better. All this illness is doing is just paving the way to heaven. I'm going to heaven and you know what? In heaven, there's no more sickness. There's no more pain. There's no more tears. We're going to heaven. Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain." That's the ultimate cure. The goal is to please God. I need to remember that I live in a sin-cursed world. I need to remember that man is not sovereign. I need to remember that God is sovereign. And I must please Him. First Thessalonians 4:1 he says, "Finally then brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more." I want to learn how to please God. I want to excel in that. I want to excel still more. And I'm going to recognize all that things that come in to my life are just ways for me to learn to please Him more. I have to believe that my loving, good, gracious, all-powerful, heavenly Father, is providentially

working in my life, for my good and His glory. That's such an important perspective. Well, there's a lot more that we could say, but let's move on to the fifth. One more reminder.

Key word here is Christ. Keep your eye on Christ. If I want to follow Him then I need to look at Him even in this regard, because He knew what it was like to suffer physically and die, didn't He? In fact, Christ effectively continued to minister even as He was experiencing the excruciating pain of crucifixion. We know about the crucifixion, we know how He had been beaten. We know that He's had a crown of thorns put on His head, we know that nails pierced His hands and His feet. We know that He was hung on a cross, we that that was unbearable pain. And if there ever was a time when Jesus might have focused on Himself, that could have been the time. But think about the ministry that He accomplished while experiencing that excruciating pain. We're told in Luke 23 verse 34 that while He was on that cross experiencing that excruciating pain He prayed, Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. He prayed for those who were inflicting the pain on Him. He evangelized while experiencing the excruciating pain of crucifixion. Remember he was hung between two thieves who were at first kind of railing on Him, but one of them had a change of heart, perhaps as he observed how Christ handled the crucifixion. And that thief said, Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom. And Jesus says, hey I'm really hurting right now. Can we talk about this, I mean this is not a good time. No, He said, today you are going to be with Me in paradise. According to John chapter 19 verses 25 and 26 He took care of His mother. He's there on the cross experiencing excruciating pain, His mother, who must have been experiencing excruciating pain watching Him, is standing there, and His apostle John is standing there, and He says, hey John, take care of my mom. He took care of His mom while He was experiencing the pain of crucifixion. And, he disciplined John giving him instructions what to do. Phenomenal ministry, accomplished by Jesus while experiencing the unbelievable pain of crucifixion. He prayed, He evangelized, He took care of His mother, He trained a disciple, and He loved us. He loved us while He was experiencing that pain. First John 3:16 says, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us." He loved us while He was experiencing that pain. Christ continued to effectively minister even when He was in great pain. Do you think He can help you to do the same? You and I, we need to hold on to these truths. We need to remember, we live in a sin-cursed world where pain is a normal part of the experience. We need to remember that man is not sovereign. Man cannot prevent all the pain that comes into our life, nor can he cure all the pain that comes into our life. Man is not sovereign. We need to remember that God is sovereign. And God is working providentially in your life as His child for your good. And we need to remember our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We remember these things, then we can persevere in the pain that we experience. And I'll tell you this, when we endure pain in this way, when we persevere through the pain and even demonstrate a joy as we go through it, the world takes notice of that because the world knows about pain. And when they see people handling it differently they take notice of that. When we remember and live out these truths, it speaks of the reality and power of God more than the greatest evangelistic rally, more than the finest church building and facilities, more than all the church ministry programs, more than all the pizzazz and pop we try to put into church ministry. The reality of God's power seen in the suffering of His people has an incredible impact. Problem is, it's so rarely found. Problem is, we deal with pain just like everybody else. Let's be those who by the power of God persevere in the pain knowing that Christ died on that cross and He rose again from the dead and that He has conquered sin and death. And that's what we remember specifically as

we come to the table now this morning. We remember that our Savior gave Himself for us. And our pain and the death that we see all around us is just a constant reminder of the reality of sin. He shed His blood so that all believing in Him would be forgiven of their sin. Be reconciled to God and lived forever with Him in a place where there is never ever any pain. So no matter how much pain you are in here today, you can partake of this table with great rejoicing and joy because we have a Savior. And I can rejoice in Him no matter how much I hurt today because He's a great Savior. If you're here visiting with us today and you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are welcome to partake. It's the Lord's table, not Believer's Fellowship table. We're all here just to rejoice in the Lord and to rejoice that His grace is so sufficient and so powerful that He can bring joy to my life even when I suffer physically. Let's rejoice in Him as we partake in the elements. Let's pray.

Lord we're thankful this morning that we can turn to your word and be reminded of these things. Nothing particularly new to what we've talked about this morning, just things we need to be reminded of and apply as we deal with the pain of everyday life. Lord, I pray that You would help us and use this time as we come to the table to keep our eyes on our Savior. To remember who He is and what He's done. The life that He gave up for us so that we might be forgiven. And Lord, may that help us to live for You today, to seek to please You today no matter what our physical condition might be. Help us, Lord, to be those who persevere through the pain, who understand that this is the nature of life in this world but there is a God who's sovereign over all these things and He's at work and I can trust Him. And I can learn new ways to trust Him and to please Him as these things come into my life. What an incredible Savior. What a wonderful Shepherd we have. Lord, help us to rejoice as we partake of these elements now. For we pray this in our Saviors name. Amen.