

The grace of gratitude – in sickness and in health

Paul Mallard: Seminar 3

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This seminar is the last in a series of three. You can watch the seminars on your own or with your church, small group, youth group or friends. The questions/reflections provided may help you discuss and work through how to apply what you've learnt to your own life.

WATCH THE VIDEO:

[Seminar 3:
tinyurl.com/4sdz58t8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sdz58t8)

SEMINAR OUTLINE

Suffering is folded into the fabric of our lives. The only condition for suffering is to live long enough. How do we continue to be grateful when life falls apart? We need to develop a robust theology of gratitude and to recognize that nothing is wasted. We can be grateful that God uses pain to deepen our relationship with him, transform our lives and alert us to eternal realities.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Romans 8:22-23, 28 help us respond to the claim, 'If you had enough faith you would be healed' and to our inner worry, 'If God really loved me he wouldn't let me continue to suffer.'
2. What does Psalm 13 teach us about how to lament well?
3. How does knowing God's sovereignty, goodness and wisdom help us to be grateful despite our suffering?
4. You are being refined like silver (Psalm 66:10-12), chastened like a beloved child (Hebrews 12:1-13), and pruned like a fruitful vine (John 15:1-8). What do these images and Bible passages teach us about God's love and purpose in suffering? How do they encourage our gratitude?
5. In what ways does suffering prepare us for glory?
6. How can we best minister to others when they are in pain?

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REFLECTION/PRAYER

- Why do we perpetuate the myth of the 'church carpark miracle', pretending to other Christians that we're not facing stress, hardship or sorrow?
- Elisabeth Elliot said, 'I am not a theologian or a scholar, but I am very aware of the fact that pain is necessary to all of us. In my own life, I think I can honestly say that out of the deepest pain has come the strongest conviction of the presence of God and the love of God.' What have you learnt about God through your pain and suffering? Pause, jot one or two of these lessons down, and turn them into prayers of thanks to God.
- Imagine the Master silversmith holding you in the furnace until all the dross is burnt away and he sees his reflection in you. Picture your heavenly Father disciplining you because you are his, he loves you and wants you to share more of his holiness. See the gardener pruning, cutting away even the good things in life, so that you would be more fruitful. Dwell on these images and share with a Christian friend how God is working in these ways in your life.
- Pain can either turn us away or towards God. Pray for the Lord's grace so you can allow this time of suffering to deepen your prayer life and strengthen your relationship with God: 'We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you' (2 Chronicles 20:12).