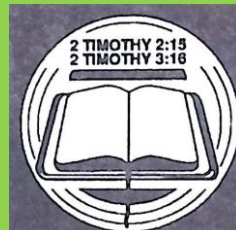


‘SUFFERING’

Charles H. Welch Recording W504
Transcribed by F. Love

**THE
BEREAN
PUBLISHING
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THE BEREAN PUBLISHING TRUST (CIO)
52A WILSON STREET, LONDON, EC2A 2ER,
ENGLAND

W504 Suffering by Mr Charles H. Welch

Mr C.H. Welch's opening prayer:

Let us pray: "Our God and Father, we do thank Thee that we come into Thy presence, not with glibness of speech, not with a show of wisdom, not with any pretence of understanding, but as children come to a Father. And Lord, there's not a father that ever lived on earth that has filled out that name as Thou doest to us. And so, we come to Thee with this holy boldness made ours through Thy beloved Son, and in that Son of Thine, we, Thy children, are fully accepted unto Thy care, guided day by day. And we ask Thee that if we learn no other lesson this evening, it may be that precious one: that whatever the outside circumstance may appear, nothing can separate us from God our Father, nothing can imperil our trust in Him, nothing can come our way apart from His consent, and so we ask Thee for grace to be able to stand fast, hold fast, and wait patiently if needs be for Thee. We pray Thee to bless our meditations upon Thy Word, so that we may not only be sound in doctrine, and sound in practice, but have a sound mind in connection with the things that have to do with our life, our walk, our peace and circumstances, and we thank Thee that Thy Word caters for every department of truth, it is true from the beginning and true right to the end. And so we commit ourselves in Thy glorious presence this evening, believing for certain, that everyone who comes to Thy Word with an open heart and a desire will get the answer of peace. Be pleased to give the answer of peace to everyone now who is listening and everyone who shall presently use this tape recording, that whatever else they may be in the teaching of Thy Word, they may experience that peace

of God that passeth all understanding, and these things we ask in the name and for the sake of Him who loved us, gave Himself for us, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour”.

The passage of Scripture I want to read this evening is the last chapter in the book of Job, and that is chapter 42. Any difficulty in finding the book of Job, it's immediately before the book of the Psalms.

This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Opened Book and is number four of the series entitled Spotlight. And we've already had three of these before us. We're not necessarily confining ourselves to any one particular aspect of truth, for that's the very nature of a spotlight - we never know what's coming next.

When you think of the Scriptures, going right back into the Old Testament 2000 years ago, 3000 years ago, it might occur to a person and say, “Well how can a book of such antiquity have any bearing upon modern life?” All the scientific advances, all the things that go to make up our life now would perplex and be a mystery to anyone who lived right back before the days of Christ. True enough, but there are some things that remain unchanged, and that is perplexities, difficulties to interpret why this happens and why that happens. I've heard people - almost, not quite, but almost - quote Scripture, although they didn't believe it and know it: "Why should this happen to me, what have I done"? Never heard it friends? Perhaps you've said it yourself - out loud or in your heart. And that is with us all the time, the problem and the answer.

So in the book of Job, which we have read, we have two statements. He said in 23:8, ‘Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him*: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see *him*: 10 But he knoweth the way *that* I take’. And in Job 19:25 he says “I know that my redeemer liveth”.

And I think if you've got those two texts as yours, you're a blessed people. If you can say with Job, in all the perplexities of his experiences, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” and then you can say, “And He knoweth the way that I take,” you'll then remember that James, who speaks about tribulation and temptation, he says, ‘You have heard of the patience of Job, have you seen the end of the Lord?’ (James 5:11).

Well, now, I want to take a little line like that this evening. The spotlight is not on Job particularly, but it's on a man named Asaph and he lived right back in those early days, the writings of the Psalms. And the Psalm that we're going to consider is Ps.73. And the first thing which is necessary for us to do, - now some of you know this altogether beforehand, but we must not assume that everybody does - so we start from the beginning. That there is a word in this Ps. 73 in our Authorised Version which is translated three different ways in the one Psalm. And although they are very similar, yet the ordinary English reader may not be hit by the fact that it says it three times over. So first of all, make sure that we've got this:

In the 1st verse - “Truly”
in the 13th verse - “Verily”
and the 18th verse - “Surely”

Truly, verily, surely, - well, they are obviously very similar. Now the next question is: Why are they introduced? Because a word is not merely a thing that's in a dictionary; it's something which is in use and has meaning. Why should he start off with the word "truly", "surely" or "verily"? Well the man had been perplexed, the man was up against a problem and this is what he writes as a preface after its all over. If you have ever written a book you know full well that the preface is not written first, although it's printed first. The preface is written after the book's finished. So he says, "look I'm now telling you; then I'll go over the ground with you." And I'm going to suggest a more colloquial translation of these three words. Instead of saying "truly", and emphasising truth, I'm going to put it this way, more as we should say it today – "after all."

Now you look: "After all God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart" (Ps 73:1).

But you say that sounds as though he doubted it a bit; well, look at next verse:

Ps. 73:2 "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped". But, after all, I've learned my lesson.

And then, presently, he says in verse 13: "After all I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Ps. 73:13,14).

You see it? Well that man is passing through an experience which many a child of God today can echo. You believe God; you believe in the efficacy of prayer; you trust in the

intercession of the risen Christ, and yet circumstances pile up until you seem as though your faith is almost threatened. And if you say, “those who are listening to me, I've never heard such a thing,” well, I don't know whether to sympathise with you or be sorry for you. Because the generality of folks never go through this pilgrimage without it having some of the experiences which are on that first pilgrimage of the people of Israel. Coming out with a high hand, the very sea opening in front of them, the very sea closing behind them and swallowing up their enemies - and they land on the other side and Egypt is finished. And they come to the wells and there's no water - you think of that, think of the shock. After all that experience in a thirsted wilderness, to be led by God, a pillar of cloud by day, of fire by night, led by God - and the wells were empty.

Then, what was the next experience? They came to another set of wells, and they were bitter. Well, what's God doing? Well, wait a minute—God said: Take a branch of that tree and treat the waters with it, and the waters that were bitter became sweet (Ex. 15:23-25). Now, as far as I can see, that's symbolic in its meaning. The bitterness of wilderness experiences are not going to be rectified by anything that man can do, but the tree throughout the Scripture continually has a reference to the work of Christ. Perhaps you know already that Peter never speaks of the cross of Christ, in spite of the fact that some people would think I'm making a mistake. You know, I never make a mistake— oh, shall I say hardly ever? Well, you know! But he doesn't; he speaks of the tree. The cross is spoken by Paul, the tree by Peter, and it means to us the cross. It's only when we appreciate the fact that we're a redeemed people and that we've been cut off from the world—so far as trusting it to guide us

and supply us—that we begin our pilgrim pathway on the right step—and so they did.

Well, now, God doesn't bring affliction after affliction upon us. The next thing is they came to a plantation of seventy palm trees and twelve wells of water. And I was interested to hear our brother Oscar Baker on one of his tapes saying, “There you are—the seventy nations, they're mentioned, and the twelve-tribe people Israel. The twelve-tribe people Israel gave the water to the nations represented by the palm tree.” (Ex. 15:27). So, you see, there's abundance in the Scriptures in its types that we can see almost at a glance, when once they're pointed out to us.

And so we go on through the whole of that wilderness journey. The temptations in the wilderness were not temptations to sin; they were temptations to trust. And sometimes, you'll discover that the temptations in the Bible have been misunderstood. The temptations were: Can God supply in the wilderness? Can He give bread from heaven? Can He give flesh to eat? You see? And when that begins to gnaw at the spiritual vitals of a person, then his walk becomes shaky, and his faith is dim.

But we come back to this Psalm 73, for here's the man writing his own experience with a little touch of guidance for ourselves afterward. So, come back again, then, to Psalm 73:2: “But as for me, my feet were almost gone.” Watch that, friends; we shall see it again coming presently. Your feet almost gone, but let's be true friends—they never have gone completely. Sometimes, the Father allows us to do a little slip to help us to remember that if we weren't holding His hand, we should've

gone completely. That's a part of our drilling; that's part of our necessary lesson. But it almost is a precious thought, isn't it? Nobody with their hand in the Father's hand will go completely over the edge—almost, but not quite.

“But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped” (Psalm 73:2). Well, nigh slipped—he's not boasting now, you see. He's beginning to say that if God had not held him, I should have been just like the wicked; his steps would have gone and well nigh slipped. And why was he in this attitude? Well, friends, even in this life, you don't walk with your feet; you walk with your mind. If you don't believe that, and you don't think where you're going, your feet will sometimes betray that you're not in command. And so, here: “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, for” (Psalm 73:2). For—here is the reason, verse 3: “For I was envious at the foolish.” That was the thing that was upsetting this man. He was now beginning to lose control, slipping and almost gone, simply because envy had entered into his heart. And why was he envious of the foolish? He explains it in the next sentence: “*when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:3).

Now, I think, if we were honest and looked back over our lives, most of us would say that at some time or another, this thought had entered, if only for a moment: “Look at me, look at the things I'm having to put up with, and yet I'm trying to stand for God and His Word. And look at so-and-so; he's getting more than heart can wish.” But afterward, when you sit back and think, especially in the presence of God, you say, “I couldn't envy them now.” But for the moment, it has an effect—let's be

honest. “I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm” (Psalm 73:3-4). I suppose that means to say that even in the hour of death, some of them have gone without apparently a tremor.

“They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men. Therefore, pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness” (Psalm 73:5-7). That's not a very good thing to happen to a person, but it seems to indicate that they were not abstemious.

“Their eyes stand out with fatness; they may have more than heart could wish” (Psalm 73:7). They're surfeited; they've got more than they want. And here's this man saying, I've sought to walk with God; I've sought to stand for the truth, and look at me.

“They are corrupt and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens” (Psalm 73:8-9). And that's very true today, friends; there are any amount of those who write, and speak, or even live, who now defy the heavens that declare the glory of God and the Book that He has left to guide us.

“They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth” (Psalm 73:9). These are figures of speech which I think we can appreciate: pride, arrogance - we've got it all, we know all there is to know, who is going to intimidate us, why should we be afraid.

“Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out unto them. 11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High”? (Ps 73:10,11). They've taught them you're trusting in a vapour. Perhaps they don't say how does God know. They may say there is no God or perhaps if they admit there is a God He's so far off He doesn't care. And you can easily sit down with a person and say look, there are so many million in the earth today and this earth is so small comparatively with the universe that it's been likened to a grain of sand on a seashore which has a little mark on it and you've got to go and find it. You say that's exaggeration, well, there you've got a vast universe and God is upholding it all. And yet that selfsame God says that not a sparrow falls to the earth without the Father's knowledge. And it even gives you that little bit of arithmetic. There's an odd sparrow by the way it's reckoned up, an odd sparrow thrown in if you buy so many and even the odd sparrow is known by the Father (Matt 10:29; Luke 12:6). Anybody listening to me who thinks they're a bit of an odd sparrow? Well if you don't think so perhaps somebody else does, but still, there's comfort there friends. The odd sparrow is known by the God Who upholds heaven and earth and the vast distances that we cannot comprehend.

So he says: “And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper *in* the world; they increase in riches”

(Ps. 73:11). They prosper in the world, but this poor world and all its riches is doomed. There is a prosperity which is associated with a world to come: He shall see His seed, He shall

prosper, He shall be satisfied—but that's in a day that's coming; we're journeying home, we're not there yet.

And so he says again, the thing that troubled him in verse 13: “Verily”—now this is where I've reached— “After all, I have cleansed my heart *in vain*...” (Psalm 73:13).

Look at all these people, their eyes stand out in fatness, they've more than the heart could wish, they have a multiplication of riches, and I seem to have been forgotten— “For all the day long have I been plagued” (Psalm 73:14). And you know, sometimes, when a person least thinks it, he expresses something which is true, and that's what Asaph did. He said, “For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning” (Psalm 73:14). Chastened, chastened—where have I read about that? Well, in the epistle to the Hebrews, which Asaph hadn't read, of course, but it refers to the same person, the same Lord, the same Book. He says that if you're children and you've got a father, you'll be chastened. Well, I don't know how far that's true in every family, but it was in the family in which I was brought up friends. I had a father, and this particular person was chastened occasionally. I give my father credit that he didn't like doing it, but sometimes he said, “I've saved this up so long, you've got to have it,” and I did. And the Scripture says, “No chastening for the present seems joyous,” and I can agree with that too because I would naturally have dodged the chastening if I could, but it says: afterward, “Afterward, it yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11), to whom? “To those who are exercised thereby.” So, after I'd thought over the chastening I had, I thought I better mend my ways and not do that anymore—well, that's only the very slight way of saying what we have to do:

repent. So, the very fact that this man could say he was chastened meant to say that he had a father. It's the unchastened child that has it all his own way. And naturally, a child who has got a father who says, "No, no, you don't do that," he's envying this youngster out in the street that does whatever he likes. But, oh, if that child only knew, the one who is out in the street and doing whatever he likes is on the road to perdition. But the child who has a father and stops him sometimes is being guided and ultimately blessed. So, this man's coming to it, you see; the word is coming to his heart.

"For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; (if I talk like this) behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me" (Ps. 73:14-16). So he's made his confession hasn't he? Up to a certain point. We've been walking with him because most of us can sympathise with him. Now he comes to a stop, he makes a definite statement and change. "It was too painful for me, until", Until what? Until you've turned over a new leaf Asaph? No, until what: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God" (Ps. 73:17). Friends that's the only answer to life's riddles. There's nobody else can answer them, there's no other place to find an answer. But if you can only go into the sanctuary of God and in that presence confess your weakness, admit your defeat and ask for pardon, peace and victory it's there. But nowhere else, this is redemption now being applied to this man's disabilities.

"Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely (here's this word again). After all thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into

destruction. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors” (Ps. 73:17 - 19). Here's a different aspect isn't it now? Just now he was murmuring, because they seemed to have it their own way, now he sees it from the angle of God. Now he sees it from the tabernacle, the mercy seat, the atonement, the redemption side and he's got a very different story.

“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image” (Ps. 73:19, 20). A difficult verse to put into modern terms. It almost looks forward to the day of resurrection and in that day the choice will be very different from what the world would expect.

In that day thou shall despise their image when one awaketh: “Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins” (Ps. 73:20,21). The reins are mainly to do with the kidneys. It's a rather remarkable fact that the various organs of the body are more intimately linked together with the person than we are apt to do today. Some may be puzzled as to why it speaks of the bowels of Jesus Christ. Well it's only because the bowels are so intimately related with our feelings as most of us know at some time.

I think most of you have been told the story which I'll mention again because of this. Some years ago, when I was at West Kirby (England, UK) in the home of Dr. Moss that's many years ago, I was sitting in the sitting room, and Dr. Moss had his wife there, and she was sitting on the other side. And a tap came on the door, and a lady put her head around the door, who

was not only a patient but a friend. And she looked across at me and said, “Oh, we needn't be reserved in front of you professional men,” and away she went nineteen to the dozen about stuff I ought not to have heard, you see. Well, when I did get a chance to break in, I said, “Do you know the Psalm which says, 'Wake up my glory?’” She looks at me; I said, “That really is referring to your liver. The word 'weight of glory' is in the Scriptures.” And the liver is the heaviest organ in the body, like the crude word for the lungs is the “lights” because they're the lightest organ in the body. And when you say, “Wake up my glory,” he was referring to the figure that is attached to glory in the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament—weight.” Well, she got puzzled over that, and when the doctor called to visit her, she said, “Who was that?” And when she discovered her mistake, she had a touch of humour and she was a wealthy woman, so she sent back £15 and said, “Give him that for his fee.” Now, don't you try that on again; you may not get the fee. But you see, I was only stressing this: that those organs of the body that God has given us are all making up this living soul, this living person. And although we don't talk about them in matters of ordinary, everyday conversation, they've all got their place.

And so he says here, “Thus my heart was grieved” (Psalm 73:21). Now, we're so used to using the word “heart” that we don't realise that's one of the many terms, as someone parodied it once; he said, “The young man said to his sweetheart, 'I love you with all my pump.’” Well, that's not quite so romantic, is it? But the heart is a gloriously wonderful pump with valves and in-and-out movements of liquid. But it also represents affection. So, the liver can refer to something which is of

weight, and the bowels can refer to something of intense feeling. And so, we are body, soul, and spirit, and we ought not to divide them. We're a complete whole in the mind of God, with all this interchange of feeling. And so he says here, "So foolish *was* I, and ignorant," now he's talking about himself again, friends, "I was *as* a beast before thee" (Psalm 73:22). Oh, he's condemning himself now for his attitude of mind; we won't interfere with him—God knows. But he's got a right about-turn now, hasn't he? And it's a right about-turn for every one of us whenever we're up to our neck in trouble to go into the sanctuary of God. And if you'll only go there, then you'll get the answer of peace. If you go anywhere else, you'll get the answer of perplexity.

So, we go on, "Nevertheless," here's one thing that's true, whether it's Old Testament or New, that God never leaves us; we may leave Him. "Nevertheless, I *am* continually with thee" (Psalm 73:23). Continually, all the time. What? All the time you were worried, perplexed, grumbling, murmuring, and afraid? Yes, I may not have experienced it, but it's a fact. In the New Testament, we have these words, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But it doesn't follow that the person to whom that's said will never leave the Lord or forsake Him for a time because that's happened over and over again. But not him, so he says, "Nevertheless, I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand" (Psalm 73:23). Don't you see why the difference between him and these other poor wretches? "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped" (Psalm 73:2). But surely, thou dost put them in slippery places and cast them down. What a difference! Oh, he said if I had my deserts, I'd have gone down with them on that

slippery slope. But "...I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand." And that's the reason why I scuffled my feet and slipped a little bit, but I never let go of Him, and He never let go of me. This is the truth for the day, friends, not only in Asaph's day. It's truth for all time till the day comes when there's no more possibility of slips and sliding's or envying's or whatnot.

"Nevertheless, I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand" (Psalm 73:23). And he begins to take courage and he looks forward now, so we may all, from day's experiences, learn the lesson and then put them into practice. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel" (Psalm 73:24). He's been rather guided a bit by his own observations, but he wasn't able to put two and two together in the sense that God could. He came to wrong conclusion; he didn't see far enough. He didn't know the depth to which these other folks would descend. He didn't know the misery that may be associated with "eyes standing out with fatness and more than heart could wish." We only see the externals.

I often think of the old chap sitting at his garden gate, and somebody trying to make him a bit envious as a very lovely motorcar went sliding by. And he said, "God is my Father, Christ is my Saviour, heaven is my home; they can have the rest." It's nice to have these other things in this life, but they're incidental; they can have the rest. And so here, he says, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," and what afterward? "And afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24). What a change has come over this man. Complaining and murmuring, and wondering, envying the wicked—and now he says, "Thou shalt

guide me with thy counsel.” Well, if he's going to be guided by the council of God, even though his foot slips a bit, he's safe and he's on the right direction. And afterward, when it's all over, “receive me *to* glory” Well, no member of the church of the one body can say more than that, for that's our hope: that “When Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” I don't say it's the same glory, for there is a glory of one calling and another, but it's much the same in parallel.

Again, he expresses a truth which he learned by going into the sanctuary of God. “Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee” (Psalm 73:25). Asaph, you're just saying the very opposite from what you were troubled about. Oh, he said I know, but that was because I was in the wrong place. There's still plenty of riches enjoyed by the wicked; they're still immune from many sufferings that I shall have to endure, perhaps. But oh, he says, I wouldn't change places with them now for anything. He says, in spite of all that, “*there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.” He's satisfied at last, friends, with a satisfaction which is anticipating the day of glory when it will be wonderfully true.

He says, “My flesh and my heart faileth”; he's recognised that too—no boasting here, is there? But, oh, remember the “buts” in Scripture: “God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee” (Psalm 73:26, 27). Horrible word but what a light it throws upon those that are far away.

Now he comes to the end: “But *it is* good for me to draw near to God”—it’s good for you too, friends as well, and for me. “I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works” (Psalm 73:28). And so he’s not only going to be satisfied and sit down, he’s going to be satisfied and stand up, and tell others—and that’s the way the witness goes. A person who has never experienced any of these things can never quite assure the one who’s suffering that what he says is not empty words. But the word sympathy—“sym” is the word “sum” together with, “pathe” means “to feel,” like pathology and so on—it means “to suffer together.” So if you have been passing through any strange experience, trying experience and you have received this consolation by at last going into the presence of God, in the sanctuary of God, and being assured, then you can speak out of a full heart.

So, when you look at Psalm 73, just remember those three occasions—surely, verily, and truly—for they are the keys that open the book. And the Book is well worth our study, for it is true for all time until, like Asaph, we are received unto glory.

Now, we bring this meeting to a close by singing hymn number 6:

“No future but glory, Lord Jesus have we,
How bright is the prospect of being with Thee.”

Now, unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.