



# Compassion

2022 - Second Quarter

## Why Does God Let Me Suffer?

“But those who wait for the Lord will receive new strength. They will lift up their wings and soar like eagles. They will run and not be weary. They will walk and not become tired” (Isaiah 40:31).

What a blessing to run and not be weary and to walk and not become tired, but so often in our world that does not happen. Illness, confinement, and other restrictions keep us from running and walking without becoming tired. Difficulties multiply and we wonder, Why? Why does God let those difficulties come into my life? Why does God let me suffer? You might think, If God really loves me, these troubles wouldn't come!

The passage above uses the illustration of eagles. Eagles might be called the king of birds. They are powerful; they are swift;

their eyesight is excellent. They soar, well, like eagles! They build their nests high above the earth in locations safe from predators.

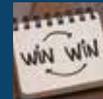
Did you know that when building their huge nests (often 4 to 5 feet in diameter and 2 or more feet deep), after the supporting base is built, eagles place thorns, rocks, and sharp branches in the nest? Next, they overlay the sharp objects with moss, grass, seaweed, sod, and wool, making the nest soft and comfortable. But when the time comes for the offspring to fly, the eagle parents will stir up the nest. Now sharp objects make the nest uncomfortable; the chicks are encouraged to leave the nest, to fly, to learn to soar. Making the nest uncomfortable seems unloving and uncaring, but the action is actually loving!

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# Facing Freedom

The Saturday evening prison worship service had ended. As the men were exiting the gym, one young man came to me looking very agitated and asked, "Could you pray with me?" He started telling me about his fears, "I don't know what's coming up next; I don't know what to expect; I don't know what's going to happen to me." I assumed he was in the early days of his sentence, and he was scared about what prison life would be like. I was wrong. As he kept talking, it became clear: He was coming up to the end of his sentence, and he was looking ahead to life after release. That's what was scaring him.

In the worship service that evening, I had preached about God sending manna to the people of Israel (Exodus 16). When I talked about how generations of slavery had made the Israelites strangers to living in freedom, he'd been paying attention. The Israelites always had slaveowners forcing a predictable structure onto their lives, and they became terrified and irrational as they entered the unknown territory of freedom, resulting in actions like lashing out at Moses and Aaron instead of praying for God's help. The man who wanted me to pray for him was starting to feel that same terror the Israelites experienced.

I'm confident that God will answer the prayer we prayed that night. God wants him, and others like him, to have people and places where they will be understood and cared for. They're entering a world without prison uniforms and prison chow lines and prison schedules, where they're responsible for making choices that they're completely out of practice making, and they're scared. Can we – as individuals and congregations – be part of God's answer to the prayers of these people?



by Chaplain  
Philip Merten



# It's a Win-Win

Yes, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21 (EHV)

Before I joined Institutional Ministries and started hanging out at a hospital most days of the week, I had very little understanding of medical care and what goes on in hospitals. My understanding was skewed somewhat by childhood experiences of loved ones going to the hospital and dying there. So, when a 90-year-old member of my congregation was considering going to the hospital for heart valve replacement, I asked him, "Why would you put yourself in this danger?" He looked me square in the eye and said, "Pastor, it's a win-win situation. If the surgery is successful, I have more time with my wife and family, and if it isn't, I'm with Jesus in heaven." Five years later, I shared that story with his family at his memorial service.

Fast forward to today: I visit two 62-year-old women fighting cancer. Both are active, faithful Christians who place their hope and trust in God. One, at the beginning of her journey, states, "If Jesus wants to take me home, I'm good with that." The

other, further along in her journey states, "I want more time. I have important things to do."

It could be tempting for us to use Paul's words in Philippians, "Yes, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," to judge the faith of someone else, but these words were a personal expression of Paul's faith and they shouldn't be viewed as the required expression of faith for everyone else.

Each person we meet has a history of life experiences which impacts their personal expression of faith. If we are walking with that person, loving that person, as Jesus encourages us, we will be "quick to listen, slow to speak." The more I listen, the more I learn that we shouldn't make assumptions about the faith of someone else. The woman who is ready to go to the Lord seems to have a good life and one would think that she would like to stick around. The other, who wants more time, shared that her entire life seems to be one trauma after another and that she still carries the effects of those traumas. Their life experiences are completely different. Ultimately, they both acknowledge that their time



is in God's hands, and they trust in his good and perfect will.

In my chaplaincy group at the hospital, we have a saying that we apply when doing some computer searches: "Less is more." I would like to apply that to our relationships. The less specific our expectations are of what a person's faith should be, the more we will find ourselves experiencing the beauty of God's grace together.



by Chaplain  
Mark Wenzel

God may be doing the same with us. Difficulties come, but they may well lead us to soar! We may be led to remember how much we need our Heavenly Father's love and care. Above all, the forgiveness of sins that is only ours through faith in the Lord Jesus. Sin is our greatest trouble, but now, sin is forgiven by Jesus. Why does God allow suffering? Maybe, it's to help us soar like eagles, and ultimately, bring us to a heavenly home for all eternity!

Heavenly Father, help me to see the blessings you provide – even the blessings you provide through suffering. Help me to soar to eternal life in heaven! Amen.



by Pastor  
Robert W. Pasbrig





Shining the light of Jesus' love on the walled-in souls of our communities!

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