

Sovereignty & Suffering: 5 Connections Between The Two

Isaiah 41:10

fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

1. Sovereignty prepares you for suffering.

“The truth of the matter is that all we have to do is live long enough, and we will suffer.”¹

“Every single reader, should you live so long, will experience a landslide of losses and disabilities. Live long enough, and you may outlive everyone you love: parents, friends, spouse, even children, perhaps grandchildren. You may outlive your money. You outlive your usefulness in the workplace and other productive arenas. You outlive your relevance. You are no longer part of what’s happening. You outlive your health as every bodily system breaks down. You might outlive your ability to walk, your toilet training, your ability to feed yourself. You may outlive your memory, and, in the extreme, might lose your ability to put thoughts together, to relate to others the way you wish you could, and even to remember who you are. Should you live long enough, you will lose every earthly good. And then you will certainly lose your life.”²

2. Sovereignty comforts you in suffering.

¹ DA Carson, *How Long O Lord?*, p. 16.

² David Powlison in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, p. 167.

3. Sovereignty enables you to profit from suffering.

“Grace means courage. When God says, “Fear not,” his aim is not that you would just calm down and experience a relative absence of fear. He does not say, “Don’t be afraid. Everything will turn out okay. So you can relax.” Instead he says, “Don’t be afraid. I am with you. So be strong and courageous.” Do you hear the difference? The deep waters have not gone away. The opposite of fear is fearlessness. Fearlessness is active and enduring. It carries on constructively in the midst of stressful things that don’t feel good at all. Courage means more than freedom from anxious feelings. Endurance is a purposeful “abiding under” what is hard and painful, considering others even when you don’t feel good.³

4. Sovereignty equips you to comfort those who suffer.

5. Sovereignty & suffering collide at the cross.

Discussion/application questions:

1. Are you currently suffering? How? How have you been responding?
2. What is your ‘go-to’ verse for suffering?
3. How does the sovereignty of God prepare you for suffering? Do you believe you are prepared?
4. What have you learned from this message about how to comfort those who suffer?
5. What suffering friend can you pray for and send a note of encouragement to?

Next week: The Authority of Scripture, Isaiah 66:2

³ David Powlison in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, p. 165.