

CHURCH OF CHRIST, NYANYA

An Annual Lectureship held on September 7th, 2025

Theme: :THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER LIFE CHALLENGES.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING.

(A presentation by Abiodun Adegoroye from Job 1:21; Romans 8:28, 32)

Preamble

It is a reality that people suffer daily, hourly, and even every second of every day! There are many reasons why we suffer but it will be so injurious to our relationship with God if we by any means come to believe that He is to be held responsible for our suffering. I once met a man born without legs posted to do the National Youth Service who was so excited about the NYSC year. Those who have complete limbs were sad about having to spend a whole year getting to know their country and serving. While some people define their suffering and its cause from their physical appearance, some define pain and suffering by the circumstances of their birth. Others define suffering by the kind of parents they have. In all these scenarios, one would be hard-pressed to understand why this have anything to do with God from whom all blessings flow. Can our perception be the problem? What you become sad about and define as suffering may be a way to grant you greatness, and because you do not perceive it correctly, you become sad and say you are suffering! A fitting passage in Scripture could be Romans 9:20-21 where Paul revealed this thought:

"But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?" (Rom 9:20-21 ESV)

The bottom line of today's discussion will be that God has a right over us and we should therefore try to understand Him and His purposes by what He has revealed to us so that we may incline our hearts to divine wisdom.

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding

In Proverbs 3:5, we are admonished "not to lean on our own understanding, but to trust in the Lord with ALL OUR HEARTS."

It is rather foolish to depend on our understanding to know God's sovereignty. To the Bible we go to understand what God has spoken about Himself:

God's Sovereignty

What is Sovereignty? It is defined as ultimate power and supreme authority to govern. The sovereignty of God in the Bible is His right to exercise His ruling power over His creation. It is described as God's absolute right to do all things according to His good pleasure. It also means that all things come from and depend on God. The Scripture says that *"This God made the world and everything in it. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and he doesn't live in temples built by human hands. He doesn't need help from anyone. He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people. From one person God made all nations who live on earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be. God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He isn't far from any of us, and he gives us the power to live, to move, and to be who we are. "We are his children," just as some of your poets have said."* (Act 17:24-28 CEV)

Let us consider the three passages of Scripture that teach us the relationship of God's sovereignty and human suffering:

1. *"And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.'" (Job 1:21 ESV)*

The patriarch, Job, was a very wealthy man who suddenly faced a life challenge that none of us today can ever face and survive! Job didn't understand why he lost all his children the same day, lost all his wealth that same fateful day and lost his health as well! He became so poor that his wife asked him to curse God and die. Why? She didn't see any sense in God, who gave them all things to enjoy to sit in heaven seeing their calamity and not doing or saying anything about it. To her, there is no point in worshiping a God who appears indifferent to their struggles, pain and sudden challenges! To Job, however, the idea of God's sovereignty was in his heart. He immediately agreed in wisdom that all things including his wealth and children have come from God and if God sees it fit to take them, God's name should remain blessed! Amazing! How many of us losing our jobs and consequently, our accommodation, remember Job? We are told to remember him:

"Indeed we count those blessed who endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you saw the end of the Lord--that He is compassionate and He is merciful." (Jas 5:11 EMTV)

The passage reminds us of the end of the story of Job! The Lord in whom he placed his trust did not disappoint him. He blessed him with a double portion! The sovereign God is wise and also merciful and we should trust Him that He knows what He is doing in His control of the world. The sovereignty of God should help us to know that though God can do whatever He wills, He has also willed that we trust Him and must we pray to Him by faith to grant us strength to go through any situation. Maybe our challenge is faith. *"Without faith, it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God..." (Heb 11:6)*

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to everyone generously without a rebuke, and it will be given to him. But he must **ask in faith, without any doubts**, for the one who has doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. Such a person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he undertakes." (Jas 1:2-8 ISV)*

What does this story tell us about God's sovereignty? It tells us that all things belong to God who gives and takes according to His will. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth!" (Gen 1:1)*

2. *"I form light and create darkness, I make goodness and create disaster. I am the LORD, who does all these things." (Isa 45:7 ISV)*

Human beings do not truly understand most of what God has done and is doing. Many times, it takes centuries before the wisdom and beauty of God's creation gets to be understood. But before this understanding, many people will "curse God and die!" It is like the clay saying to the potter, "why are you making thus?" The audacity of human beings to feel that they are at par with God is amazing. What do we know? What can we know? In Deuteronomy 29:29, the people of God were told that whatever the Lord reveals is for them to understand, and whatever God did not reveal to man is for God! Jesus did not reveal all He could have revealed to the men He chose to give us His will in the New Testament. He said, *"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (Joh 16:12 MKJV).* God may have many things to say to us but we cannot bear them. For example, most of us

cannot bear the thought and sight of angels surrounding us, for if we are allowed to see an angel in his glory, we will faint and be so afraid! This aspect of God Sovereignty has to do with His perfect will. He know why He created things and for what purpose. "Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him." (Ecc 7:13-14 ESV)

God's curriculum for us as His children therefore, may not be understood, just like the apostles struggled to understand the kingdom of God that they were inheriting (Act 1:6-7), but they should be accepted! . Jesus told them that it is not for them *"to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own authority."*

What we are to know, we pray to know. Paul was in pains and he prayed that the pain he had, God should remove. Though he prayed three times, the Jewish expression for complete and full request, God did not answer him the way he wanted but strengthened him to go through it by changing his perception that the suffering he though he was experiencing is actually a way to greater strength and glory. The lesson helps us to accept God's revelation and situations we cannot change and begin to appreciate the lessons of pain. No pain, no gain! Tinubu's subsidy removal becomes a blessing if only we an see the future and understand the way it moved us into not depending on Government more but become self-sustaining. Maybe the cancer I experienced was a way to strengthen my faith in God in a real sense. Paul's imprisonment was a blessing in disguise as he said that it created opportunity for the guards in Caesar's palace to become Christians and for the church to begin in a most unlikely places.

The statement, "If it is not a blessing, there is a lesson," says it all. It points to our inadequacy to understand that *"all things work together for the good of those who love God."* (Rom 8:28)

3. *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."* (1Ti 3:16 KJV)

God's sovereignty made Him to become flesh and to offer the best of Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of human beings. The consequence of this for our understanding of human suffering is that though we deserve eternal death after sinning and going into darkness, God has made a way to help the broken world see the light and be redeemed and reconciled to Him. *"For God so loved the world..."* (John 3:16) In our suffering therefore, we ought to pause and think, *"why is this happening to me and what part has my sins in the things I experience?"*

4. *"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* (Joh 14:13-14 KJV)

Can heaven be made subject to the will of man? Sounds incredible, but this is what God promised His own children! He says, ask! If you are going through a rough patch, have you asked for wisdom to understand? For those in the first century who were going through horrible persecution and suffering, the Holy Spirit says, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you are involved in various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But you must let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing."* (Jas 1:2-4 ISV). Why did God want us to change our perception about suffering? Because, not all suffering is bad. Some are to build your patience, character and

trust in the Almighty God. When Israel was to receive their freedom from Egyptian captivity, they had to face their fears and trust God to deliver. They had to go through being chased and boxed in by the sea and the Egyptian army so that they can see the salvation of the Lord and then believe! How many believed? Because of unbelief, God sent snakes to frighten them and made them understand that faith is not looking at the fearful situation but at Him who can resolve it. The storms that arose when the disciples were on the sea of Galilee was designed to help them see the power of God over the elements! God says, ask! Do we ask? How do we ask? If we ask to satisfy our selfish desire, it would not work. *"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Aren't they caused by the selfish desires that fight to control you? You want what you don't have, so you commit murder. You're determined to have things, but you can't get what you want. You quarrel and fight. You don't have the things you want, because you don't pray for them. When you pray for things, you don't get them because you want them for the wrong reason – for your own pleasure."* (Jas 4:1-3 GW)

God placed Himself at our service and asked us to trust Him and ask for whatever we will in His name! Are we going through a lot? Can we ask that God's will be done even in our suffering? Maybe when we are able to see the lessons and blessings in our situation can we begin to praise God like Paul in our pain and suffering. *"And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened."* (Act 16:23-26 ESV). God answered their prayers in a spectacular way! Earthquake, prison doors opening, a Roman jailer becoming a child of God, etc. When God's will is utmost in our hearts and we are asking for us to do His will, we will pray like Elijah and the heavens will cease to bring forth rain for three years! (Jas 5:17)

CONCLUSION

Are you in pains? Call on His name! Are you suffering, sing Psalms! (Jas 5:13-14) Are you sick, ask for God's will to be done in the sickness, for it may be to magnify the name of God! (John 9:2-3). Some sufferings are a result of our sins and we suffer the consequences of our addictions and waywardness (Pro 13:15; 4:19; Jer 2:19). Some of our suffering are as a result of our faith, like Job's trials; and some are just to glorify God in our lives (Joh 9:2-3). A large percentage of our sufferings may result from the wickedness and sins of other people. The corruption in our land has caused us pain and suffering unimaginable. But in all these pain and sufferings, is God sovereign? Yes! Does He have the power to help us? Yes! Is He willing to help us? Read Romans 8:32 and understanding will come: *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom 8:32 KJV). Let us not be like the ignorant widow whose only son died in an accident and she stopped believing in a God that allowed her son to die! It was the words of an old preacher that revived her faith when after she asked him, *"where was God when the driver killed my son?"* and he replied, *"I don't know where He was...maybe He was where He was when His own son was killed..."*

From one suffering in prison, *"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Php 4:6-7 ESV)

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