**Text

Description automatically generated**

“DOING & SUFFERING”

- Week 3 -

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 5:10NLT

**10In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.**

MESSAGE

*Again, this series was originally written for the season of Lent, a time of preparation, self-reflection, and repentance. So, many of those things and the topic of Lent and Easter preparation appear in this message. If you aren’t doing this for a Lenten series, tailor accordingly.*

We are in week 3 of our series called, “Covenant,” where we have been looking at the need for control our in our lives, the problems we encounter when that happens, and how to surrender our lives to God.

And remember, we’re in the season of Lent, the 6 weeks that lead up to Easter. Lent is a time to prepare our hearts for that celebration. And so we’re using this series as a way to do that… to do some self-examination, some spiritual house-cleaning, before we get to the celebration of Easter.

So, week one, we started by talking about our need for control, and the foundation of how to give control back to God. It begins with realizing our lives aren’t ours to begin with. Everything we have is a gift from God, including our lives. And when we realize that, we can offer them back to God, the one who should be in control in the first place. When we do that, when we surrender control of our lives to God, we find a sense of peace on the journey

Then, last week, we started getting more specific, talking about surrendering to God the stress and anxiety we find in our professional lives, our jobs and finances, an area that often feels out of our control… because it often *is* out of our control. But we can give our worry over to God, because Jesus reminded us that our Heavenly Father, who knows better for us than we do, has promised to provide for us, no matter what station in life we find ourselves.

Today, we’re going to move to the next area in life that often causes us great anxiety, and an area that can send our lives spinning *out* of control.

Now, we’ve been using an historic prayer written 250 years ago to help us with this.

*[Hand out bookmarks for anyone who wasn’t here last week]*

If you weren’t here last week or the week before, this prayer is taken from a guy named John Wesley, who started the Methodist movement in the 1700s. Each week, we’re breaking this prayer down, line by line, to help us understand surrendering our lives to God.

The first line is what we talked about week 1

**I am no longer my own, but thine.**

Which just means, “God, our lives are not ours to control. Our lives are yours.”

Last week we looked at the second line,

**Put me to what thou wilt,**

**rank me with whom thou wilt.**

Which means, “God, whatever you want me to be doing, and whatever station in life you want me to have… I’m going to be okay with that.”

Today, we’re going to look at the third line.

**Put me to doing, put me to suffering.**

Now, here’s where this prayer starts to get difficult. Saying to God, ”I am no longer my own, I am yours”… is one thing. Saying to God, “I’ll be okay with whatever station in life you have for me”… is one thing. But saying to God, “If there is suffering in my future, I’ll be okay with that, too”… that’s a whole different ball game!

But that’s actually what I love about this prayer, it’s not an easy prayer.

See, when we pray, we get into the habit of praying for things we think we want or need, right? “God, please let there magically appear a million dollars in my mailbox tomorrow.” We pray for things as if God is a cosmic genie, who is just supposed to wave a magic wand, and give us stuff. That’s not prayer, and not how prayer works.

Life has ups and downs… so this prayer has ups and downs. Life has times of ease and times of suffering. So this prayer has both doing and suffering.

Now, it’s important for us to talk about the difficult times in life because, as we’re talking about control in this series, when we are suffering, when things go bad, it can feel like life is out of our control. I find this to be a very poignant thing to talk about this week…

<*connect to something current in the world or your faith community that illustrates difficult time you or they might be experiencing. This was written during the pandemic, so I addressed the following.>*

*We’ve never experienced anything like this. My parents have spoken about the Cuban Missile Crisis or the oil shortage of the 70s having similar levels of panic, but nothing, nothing like this. You wanna talk about a situation of suffering that can feel out of control, we’re living it.*

So, what do we do when things go bad?

First, I have to give a bit of a disclaimer. It’s bad theology to think God enjoys making us suffer so as to test us or teach us something and, therefore, we should pray for it to happen. God doesn’t cause bad things to happen to us. So, take a deep breath… praying the line, “put me to suffering,” doesn’t mean you’re asking for it. Rather, view this line of the prayer, not as an invitation, but rather as a recognition and a relinquishing. It is a recognition that you are aware that bad things are just a part of the crazy world we live in, and it is a way to say you relinquish control of the outcome of that dark time in your life. You’re just saying, “God, when I’m ‘doing’ and things are good, I’m yours. When I’m suffering, and things aren’t good, I’m still yours.”

So what do we do? When something in life goes wrong, we’ve lost a job, we or a loved one has fallen ill, someone close to us has passed… whatever it is, when we find ourselves in a time of suffering and everything feels out of our control, where do we find comfort, and how to we give control over to God?

We find some advice in a letter written by one of Jesus’s first disciples, a guy who had firsthand knowledge and experience of Christ. His name was Peter. Well, his real name was Simon, but Jesus gave him the nickname Peter, which means “The Rock.” (What a cool nickname, right? “The Rock.” Before Dwayne Johnson, there was Simon Peter. One of the disciples, James, got the nickname, “The Less.” He had to be seriously jealous of The Rock. Anywho…) Jesus gives him the nickname, “the Rock,” because upon him Jesus would begin to build his church. Fast-forward to after Jesus’ death, and Peter is doing that very thing… building the church with these early Christian communities. They’re being persecuted, imprisoned, put to death… A group of people going through serious suffering. So Peter wants to encourage them. He writes this…

**10In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. (1 Peter 5:10 *NLT*)**

Peter has been through his share of persecution at this point, so he knows what he’s talking about. He has seen his brothers and sisters in Christ suffer, so he knows what he’s talking about. Peter will eventually die for this very belief… so he knows what he’s talking about.

He’s talking to this early Christian community, who is in the middle of their own suffering, and he’s talking about that lack of control they’re facing, and he wants to offer them some hope for the future. And so he says (paraphrased), “I get that you’re suffering. I get that you’re going through difficulties. I know, it sucks, it’s just part of life that’s just going to happen… but God will restore, support, and strengthen you.”

It’s that last bit that I want to focus the rest of our time on today. There’s a word right there in the middle that I want to highlight… “restore.”

See, our **God is a God of Restoration.**

God enjoys taking old things and make them new. God likes to remodel and rebuild. God loves to take things that have been worn down, beat up, weathered and withered, and give them new life. And this is the point Peter is trying to make to the church, and the point he makes to us. When we wade through the times of suffering, we can’t help but feel worn down and beat up. We can’t help but feel weathered and withered. We can’t help but look at the herculean task of climbing out of that pit, and say, “I can’t do it. I just want things to be how they were.”

“I want my job back.”

“I want my health.”

“I want that loved one here.”

“I want that old life.”

But our God is a God of restoration, so He looks down and goes, “You know, I get that. I know you liked things how they were. And I know you hit a rough patch and things kinda went into a tailspin. I know you feel like things are out of control. But, you know, I invented time to only go in one direction. So, what’s done is done. We can’t go back. Sorry. So I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I love me a good restoration project.” (Our God is an HGTV-type of God.) He says, “*If you’ll let me*, I can take your rough edges, your weathered spirit, your broken life, and turn it into something beautiful.”

Our God is a God of restoration.

And so when we pray that line, “God, put me to doing, put me to suffering,” it’s not an invitation to bring on suffering, rather it’s a recognition that suffering is going to happen. It’s just going to be part of life. But because you are a God who loves to take that brokenness, that dark time, and do a restoration project with it, I’m going to trust you in the midst of the suffering. I’m going to trust you in the midst of the darkness. God, I give you control.

So if you are in the midst of one of those dark times, hold onto this scripture as you pray this prayer. Your suffering won’t last forever. God will support and strengthen you in the midst of it. And he will restore your life as you set your feet back on a firm foundation.

As we pray our prayer today, that’s what I want you to think about when we get to that line, saying, “God, I know that there will be suffering in life. But in the midst of the darkness, I will give control to you.”

Let’s pray.

**I am no longer my own but thine.**

**Put me to what thou wilt,**

**rank me with whom thou wilt.**

**Put me to doing, put me to suffering.**

**Let me be employed for thee,**

**or laid aside for thee.**

**Let me be exalted for thee,**

**or brought low for thee.**

**Let me have all things,**

**let me have nothing.**

**Let me be full,**

**let me be empty.**

**I freely and humbly yield all things**

**to thy pleasure and thy disposal.**

**And now, sweet Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,**

**I am thine and thou art mine.**

**And may this covenant made on Earth,**

**be ratified in heaven.**

**So be it.**