

## Denver Snuffer Podcast 186: Suffering, Part 3

This is part three of a series looking at the role of suffering in the life of the Savior, and how our own suffering brings us closer to Him.

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DENVER: Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 1, says: *VERILY, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am* (see also T&C 93:1).

*Every soul who forsaketh his sins*—you're not gonna get past your sins until God forgives you. But you need to awaken to the fact that you possess them, and turn from them. Because turning from them is repentance—turning to face Him. You can still have a load that needs to be dropped because we are all heavy laden with sin. But forsaking your sins means that you would prefer Him over everything else there is. So turn and face Him.

*Cometh unto me*—well, the only way you can leave that load behind is to get down in prayer, seeking Him, and asking Him to free you from the load, and to allow you (as Alma recounts in his 36th chapter of the book of Alma: the terrible agony that he felt and calling upon God to be redeemed and then, when God answered, he could remember the pain—the distress that he had—was equaled by the joy and the exhilaration he felt on the other side of that)—being cleansed.

*Calleth on my name*—you have to do that.

*And obeyeth my voice*—that would include not merely the things that were given to us by Joseph Smith that you may be neglecting, but obeying His voice in what He tells you here and now, because your agenda is different from mine. Your needs are different from mine. Your responsibilities are different from mine. You have your own family; you have your own ward; you have your own neighbors; you have your own issues. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters—you're part of a community somewhere. And inside of that, **all** of you need to listen to the voice of God because He loves everyone. He loves that eccentric aunt that you just dread having come around. And you can't, for the life of you, understand why she thinks cloves should be poked into a turkey on Thanksgiving. And you wonder if maybe there shouldn't be a procedure that more easily confines her to someplace where they administer psychotropic drugs [audience laughter]. God loves her as much as He loves you. God loves all of us. And the agenda that you have, and the people you can affect, and the relief that you can administer, and the needs that go in front of your eyes day by day are uniquely yours. And the relief that you can grant to those around you—that's yours. It was given to you by God as a gift. Don't harden your heart.

I was reading about the problems that the early saints experienced in that 1857/1856/1858 timeframe—from the diaries; not the official history, not from the stuff that is made public; these are the private diaries and journals—I was reading from that in sacrament (we went home, and I attended my church meetings this morning), and I literally cried as I

read what they were called upon to go through. I am very disinclined to be critical and non-appreciative of the fact that those who went before us suffered as they suffered, in order to preserve and make possible for us today the programs, the scriptures—the fact that they would not allow the restoration, through Joseph, to lapse into silence and neglect. It doesn't matter that they made mistakes. We make mistakes, too—every one of us. If you'd lived a perfect life, you wouldn't be here. The fact is, we **all** are broken, and we are **all** in need of repair.

Come to Him, because the only repairman that exists in the universe—inside of **this** matrix—is Christ, whose assignment it is to repair and redeem and to heal us. Obey His voice, no matter how much it may disagree with the flow of that that goes on all around you. People thought I was a madman (teaching gospel doctrine) when we got to the King Benjamin talk about not allowing beggars to go by and neglecting them. And I got push-back, every four years, when we got through that material because I'm saying, "You don't judge the beggars." You really don't have any right to do that. And then you have Paul's statement about being careful to entertain strangers because angels sometimes come among you unawares.

Let's assume, for argument's sake, that John lingers still. And let's assume, for argument's sake, that John would like to know your heart. How might he do that best? I would suggest, coming to you as a beggar, smelling foul and in need, asking you for relief is the perfect way to find out if that same spirit animates you as animated King Benjamin, when King Benjamin said, 'Don't suffer the beggar to put up their petition to you in vain because are we not all beggars?' And of course, that's not merely a rhetorical question. Are we not all beggars? Well, it's self-evident—yeah.

*Obeyeth my voice and keepeth my commandments*—"My commandments," given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, entrusted to you, should be respected by you; given by the voice of the Spirit to you, asking you to help those around you, because the relief that people need sometimes can only come from one source, and that is you; under the inspiration of the Spirit, relieving the burdens of those around you. Why do you think God cares about the widows and the orphans and the poor and the infirm? And who at Bountiful appreciated His coming the most? Was it those that were called to preside, whose names are given to us because they were recorded in the record? Or was it those that He said—the nameless group—"Bring them up here, and let me heal them"? And all of those in need of healing were brought forward and healed. We read the record and say, "I got a name here; I got a Timothy. I got a name here; I got a Nephi. I got a name here, and this must be someone big and great and important." But unto whom did the Lord minister more? And who was it in Bountiful who appreciated more what the Lord had come to do?

Be like your Master. Do what you can for those around you who are infirm. They are here in abundance—the brokenhearted, the families that are in need. If you want to be saved, help the Lord save others—not by preaching and clamoring and demanding that they view the world like you do, but by giving them a hand. Your most powerful sermon can be in the effort that you make and the time that you take to let people know that you care about them. If you would like to repent of your sins, take a look around at those in need, and do

what you can for them, because you've begun the first step. When your heart is like Him, then you open up so that He can enter in. And when your heart is unlike Him, well, there's no room except if He break it—which He will do. You do these things, *you shall see my face and know that I am*—**know**; not believe, but know.

So, according to the Lectures on Faith, if you would be saved, you have to be **exactly, precisely** what Christ is **and nothing else**. Now, you've been told all your life that that's an impossibility. Well, it's an impossibility, in one sense, and it's a mandatory requirement, in another sense. It's an impossibility because, as it turns out, we all err. All of us err; we always have. And that's what the atonement was designed to fix—because He picks that burden up, and He carries it for us.

But the fact that He will carry that burden for us doesn't relieve **us**—from the moment that He's taken that away—from then going forward to do good. You **can** be Christ-like. You **can** administer relief to those around you. You **can**, as He said, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit those who are in prison. Some of the most profound, deepest, spiritual experiences that I have had recounted to me by people I know, came from people who go out to the prison in Bluffdale and hold family home evenings with prison inmates. That ministrations/service elevates the servant. Their heart gets moved with compassion. Your heart needs to be like Christ's—moved with compassion for others.

And the way you do that is imitative at first. And then it is informed by the experience later. What begins as imitation, and merely that, finds room within to have genuine compassion for the needs of others. Christ is the prototype, but you *can* be like Him. There are godly people walking around; many of them are elderly. Many of them have long since forgotten their own needs, and they spend their lives in service of others. You can find that even within the church with Relief Society Presidents. You can find that within the church with people who do legitimate-needs home teaching. You don't have to go find another church in which to serve. You don't have to find new neighbors, and you don't have to have a new family. That eccentric group of people, that tribe into which you were born—you belong there. You belong there as an example—as an example of love and compassion.

And you know, the reason why (in the Sermon on the Mount) He says they're going to speak *all manner of evil against you falsely, for my [name's] sake* (Matthew 5:11; see also Matthew 3:14 RE) is not because of anything you've done. It's because down here, no one believes. No one believes the genuine thing exists. Everyone's heart has been broken; everyone has been disappointed. Everyone says, "The man I thought was going to be so great has turned out, instead, to be just another broken ship-wreck." Their skepticism of you has been earned in this environment by everyone they've ever met. Therefore, you've got to be different. And you've got to expect their broken heart is going to be taken out on you until you, at last—and it may require your life to do it—until you, at last, show that faith can yet exist here.

Let it exist here in you. Let it live and breathe in you. You needn't look for another life/another opportunity somewhere else far away to go. It's right here; it's in your lap; it's in your family; it's in your home; it's in your community; it's among all those egotistical,

hard-headed, stubborn Gentiles that we parade around, lauding one another, and talking about what great things we are. Serve them. Submit to their rule. Do it in a way that will touch their hearts and be the real thing. Be the real thing. And finally, at last, there will be those who are worthy to lead.

You need to be like Christ. It is precise. It is exact.

Jesus Christ is the heir of this Kingdom—the Only Begotten of the Father according to the flesh, and holds the keys over all this world. Men have to suffer that they may come [up unto] Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 36: *The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one* (see also T&C 93:11). What if, instead of repentance being related to your misdeeds—which are so plentiful and persistent and will continue—what if, instead, it is related to the acquisition of light and truth—that is, intelligence? What if repentance requires you to take whatever it is that you have that is a foolish error/a vain tradition/a false notion and replace it with the truth?

My suspicion is that whatever it is that is troubling you, it will trouble you considerably less if you begin to fill yourself with light and truth, until at last you arrive at a point where you look back upon your sins and you say, “I have no more disposition for that because I, frankly, know enough not to do that anymore and because I prefer the light and because I prefer God's intelligence and glory over that which I used to trade/to substitute for it.” You see, repentance may have a whole lot more to do with your own feeble education in the things of God than it does have to do with the time you spend wasted, looking at some vile picture or other.

You know, we have this Victorian sexual mores that everyone in Wall Street tacks against—like when you're in a sailboat and there's a headwind, you "tack" against it. Quite frankly, I find most of that stuff boring and not titillating. Some of it's medical, but it's not enticing. And from a certain perspective, if you will acquire enough light and truth, you're not going to be contaminated by exposure to the things that are degrading.

The Book of Mormon was abridged by a man who lived inside an environment that was filled with sex and violence. And he was untouched by it—a man of righteousness. And why is it that he could preserve himself? Because what was in him was light and truth. He had educated himself; he had learned about the things that are true so that when you minister to someone who is suffering, their sins ought not shock you. They ought to cause compassion to well up in you. People struggle with some very difficult, very challenging things. You need to try and overcome that by the light within you. The glory of God is intelligence. Be intelligent.

At one point, Christ—talking to Abraham—says He is more intelligent than them all. One will be more intelligent than another. *These two [things] exist, [if there be two beings], one [will be] more intelligent than the other...I am more intelligent than [them] all* (Abraham 3:19; see also Abraham 5:4 RE). That's what Christ said. And Joseph Smith, talking about

the Holy Ghost, says, “I... know more than all the world... [or] the Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and...[it’s in] me” (*TPJS*, 350).

The fact of the matter is that you **can** fill yourself **with the mind of God**. And if you fill yourself with the mind of God, you’re gonna find yourself in a position where you, like the scriptures recite, have no more disposition to do evil but to only do good continually. **That** repentance is as a consequence of the things that you know. **That** repentance comes as a consequence of the light and truth within you.

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt; lay down the burden of sin. Stop focusing on that stuff, and become like Him. And you become like Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural by-product of that process, ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will **have** compassion when you minister **with** compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to—and receive within it—light and truth when your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful and holy and just God, whom you claim to worship. Worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you, and go do something that is holy for someone else. However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you. You become different. You become better. You become more like our Lord—because when you give whatever it is you give away, you get more in return. But make sure that what you give goes to relieve the suffering of others. ***Relieve the suffering of others.***

You’re going to have to finish that path. You’re going to have to rise up. If you expect to be in His presence when He returns—and He is coming in judgment—then **you’re** going to have to be like Him; because if you are not like Him, you will not be able to endure His presence. Take it seriously. Study it through. Seek to be like Him whom you worship. It is possible—not while you’re carrying a load of sins that trouble you and worry you and distract you, but that’s what the Lord will remove from you. He can take all of that away, but it is entirely up to you to choose **then** to do something to draw nearer to Him. He can’t do that because that would violate your free will. **You** have to choose to be like Him. Although He may remove all of the stains upon you, you have to go forward and not stain yourself again, because He can’t stop you from doing that. You’re free to choose. Therefore, choose the better part.

The atonement isn’t like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but **you** must rise up. **You** must acquire those virtues. The glory of God **is** intelligence. And repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence—that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake. And those that are here with you in need, they represent Him. And when you do it to even the least of them, He will credit that as having been done for Him. And no good deed will be gone unnoticed with Him. He even notices when the sparrows fall. So is He not going to notice when your knee bends with compassion, praying for His mercy for someone that has offended you? And when you pray for those who have offended you, do

you think for one moment that that doesn't change your own heart?

The reason to rejoice and be exceedingly glad when they “say all manner of evil against you falsely” is because it affords you the opportunity, with compassion (like our Lord, who forgave even those who were in the act of killing Him—not their brutality, but their ignorance; because when the day arrives that they see things aright finally, and they realize what offense they gave out—they had no intention of offending their Redeemer. They were carrying out the execution of a criminal. And so, He had compassion on them for their ignorance)—

**You** have compassion for all those around you who are ignorant. If you think you know a little more than them, then use gentleness and meekness to persuade them. Sometimes, what you try to persuade them of is going to offend them. Couple it with your own testimony of the truth. Don't let them simply go away offended. Let them know that when you give offense (and you surely will give offense), let them know that you did it because of your love for them, your love of God, and your faith in the things that God is doing. When you offend, do it kindly and while bearing testimony of the truth and with the compassion that should hail from a position of greater light and truth or intelligence. They don't know what they're doing. They don't understand it yet. So help them.

It is **knowledge** that saves. Consequently, it is knowledge that you need to repent and obtain. "Knowledge saves a man," said Joseph Smith. "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge," said Joseph Smith (*DHC*, 4:588, 10 April 1842). Knowledge and salvation; knowledge and repentance—they are all related. But knowledge is not given so that you can take prideful advantage of the fact that you possess something. If you have it, it is given to make you a minister, a servant, someone the Lord might be able to employ in order to raise up others. Because if you can't elevate others, then you've failed in your effort to be like Him. He came to serve. You serve, too.

20: *To obtain the faith*— and this is a ways into that paragraph,

*Because to obtain the faith by which he could enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, he had to suffer the loss of all things: this is the reason that the Former Day Saints knew more, and understood more of heaven, and...heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith—to be obtained by no other means. ...where faith is, there will the knowledge of God...also, with all things which pertain thereto—revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every...necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation; for God must change, otherwise faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom, until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent: whom to know is eternal life.*

That's the purpose of the Gospel—to give you knowledge. Therefore, the way to get knowledge is to repent. It's to search into, lay hold upon, and obtain for yourself knowledge that saves...

Look at verse 42 [D&C 84:42]:

*And wo unto all those who come **not** unto this priesthood... (D&C 84:42, emphasis added)*

So, there is a “wo” associated with that. It is not: “wo, wo, wo.” It’s not a threefold condemnation. It is not a dreadful, despicable, wretched outcome. It’s simply disappointment because the invitation has been extended to you, and if you do not rise up to receive that invitation, then **you will** suffer disappointment. **You will** come to the point in which your condition is woeful, because there’s something that you know that you might have obtained, and you did not.

God is endless; therefore, His word is endless, and His covenants are endless, and His commitments are endless. And if you lay hold upon it, you lay hold upon something which is itself endless.

And it was delivered, just as we saw in Doctrine and Covenants section 84:

*And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God. (Ibid, vs.29-31)*

Now, take that impressive list of things, and read it in light of this:

*...to do all things according to **his** will, according to **his** command, subdue principalities and powers; and this **by the will of the Son of God** which was from before the foundation of the world. (Ibid, vs. 31)*

See, such persons holding such power **are not freelancing**. And in fact, evidence of the possession of this power does not come as a consequence of someone displaying **every one** of these things, **but** if they display **any** one of these things... For example, Nephi (when he was bound in the desert and left to die by his brothers) broke every band that bound him, having been strengthened by God (see 1 Nephi 7:16-18; see also 1 Nephi 2:4 RE). And that **same Nephi**, bound to the mast when the storm came that threatened the survival of the ship, not only could not break the band, but when they finally got around to relieving him, he said his hands were much swollen as a consequence of the trauma that he’d suffered (see 1 Nephi 18:15; see also 1 Nephi 5:30 RE). Nephi—who had power given to him by God to break the bands that would’ve cost him his life—was left subject to the bands because it was not according to the Father’s will or the word of the Son when he was bound to the mast. And so, had Nephi called upon that power and not suffered, Nephi would’ve been offending—and not conforming to—the will of God. And he would have had to suffer some loss.

Moses had power to divide the seas. And he did that by the word of God (see Exodus 14:15-16, 21; see also Exodus 9:3-4 RE). And yet, when Moses used the power to cause the rock to bring forth water (and not at the command of God), he suffered some loss. Possession of the power does not mean you freelance. Because in the very statement about the possession and the capability and the capacity, it says it's according to His will. Therefore, in order to be someone who can be trusted, you have to be someone who will subordinate to His will.

The scriptures are talking about a relationship between Powers of Heaven and the recipient of authority—that is, priesthood is fellowship. And when you do something to sever that fellowship, then you have done something that damages, injures, hinders, or altogether departs from the fellowship that you had.

*and...the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon...principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (Ibid, vs. 36-37)*

So then, if one has this fellowship and has this authority (or is in fellowship with that group from which such power reckons), how is it, then, that you exercise that authority? Well, the answer's also contained in the same revelation.

*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, ...by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. (Ibid, vs. 41-42; see also T&C 139:5-6)*

So, if you find someone who is armed with this, what you're gonna find is someone whose tool is persuasion and who offers knowledge—and whose knowledge will not reckon merely from the writings, the theories, and the philosophies of men, but it will reckon, rather, from a higher place.

And let me couple that with: What is the tool? How do I get to use the priesthood? How is it that I do get to exercise some influence? *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned (ibid, vs.41).*

I thank God I do not preside over any of you. I thank God I have no responsibility for any of you, my family aside. Let me tell you that even within my own family, I don't feel it is my prerogative to do anything other than to use persuasion, to use long-suffering, to use gentleness and meekness and love unfeigned, and to try—**kindly**—to use pure knowledge to lay the matter out.



There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. 1st. The king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. **Angels** [now, remember what I said earlier about there being different ranks, Angels] desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. (DHC 5:554-556; August 27, 1843, emphasis added)

See, the angels were unwilling to receive what they might have received, and as a consequence of that, they could not go.

Look in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 16: *Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.* Angels, in this context (if you will hear it), are included within Joseph's description of "angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes," as a consequence of their unwillingness to receive what God freely offers to all. And they're hedging up their own way by their failure to develop that faith and confidence necessary to lay hold upon the blessings of heaven, because they believe that those blessings are reserved for others and not for them; because, as the (de-canonized now) Lectures on Faith suggest, they fear that they do not have the power to lay hold upon all the blessings which were entirely reserved and promised **to** them (see Lectures on Faith, Lecture Third, paragraph 23). Because they have not that faith required, they become limited in what they seek for and, therefore, what they obtain.

God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned (DHC 5:554-556; August 27, 1843)—

...which is why when the Lord sets something in motion and begins to declare the truth again (and He offers a message that needs to be received, and it is not received by those to whom it is offered), the results are 'they refuse to receive the blessing or knowledge that is offered to them, and therefore they will be damned'—damned in the sense meaning that they hedge up the way, that they limit the ability of God to confer upon them what they might have received. They partake of, ultimately, the sufferings of the damned because the pain of the mind is exquisite when they realize that they have not laid hold upon what God freely offered to give unto them, and therefore, they are their own condemnor, and they are their own judge.

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- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 titled "Repentance" given in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013

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