

Sermon Discussion Questions | April 10, 2016 Hebrews 12:1-2, II Corinthians 1:1-11 | “Jesus Is Courageous”

1. Which of the following metaphors best describes your Christian experience at this time: immobile, crawling, walking, running a sprint, running a marathon, running a steeplechase?
2. What is the significance of the statement: “the human eye cannot simultaneously focus on two objects at two distances with equal clarity at the same time”? Today we are considering what happens if we allow our *pain* and *suffering* to be the focus of our attention. What other things become your focus, especially when you are tempted or stressed?
3. Is it appropriate for the Christian to face and acknowledge points of pain in their life? (see various Psalms of “lament” that are both “communal” (Psalm 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129) and “individual” (3,4,5,7,9,10,13,14,17,22, etc.).
4. How does Paul share his experience of pain with the church in Corinth?
 - a. What is the cause of his pain?
 - b. What is the depth of his pain?
 - c. What is the result of his pain?
5. Think of a particularly painful experience in your own life (cause, depth, result). Did that pain become your primary focal point so that Jesus became blurred? What was the result for you spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally?
6. What does it mean to *share in our sufferings* (vs. 7)? Do you believe that God calls the church in general and Central Presbyterian in particular to be a community of believers where we can share our suffering with each other in a way that honors God, edifies the saints, and witnesses to the world? How do you “steward your suffering”? Consider the implications of *I Cor. 12:26*.
7. What does it mean to *share in the sufferings of Christ* (vs. 5)?
 - a. Christ’s atoning suffering is complete (*Is. 53:11; Jn. 19:30; Heb. 9:26-28*)
 - b. Christ’s ministry to those who suffer is incomplete (vs. 4) - *shepherding* ministry

8. What are the three “purposes of pain” that Pastor Hopper gleaned from this text?
- a. “seminary of suffering to train us” (vs. 3-7) – to pray for and comfort others
 - b. “weight of suffering to humble us” (vs. 8-9, 11) – to deepen our dependency
 - c. “pathway of suffering to refocus us” (vs. 10b) – to show us our source of hope
9. What does this phrase mean to you? - *Jesus loves you so much that pain is part of His plan - and that plan is in His hand. Is it time to acknowledge your pain, and ask God to refocus the eyes of your (our) heart on the gospel, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God (Hebrews 12:2).*