

Dealing With Trials

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[0:00] Well, turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 88. A couple of weeks ago, we began to look at the big picture. heat, thorns, cross, and fruit. A paradigm through which we can look at our lives, through which we can view various portions of Scripture and apply them to our lives.

We see that there's heat in the world, there's difficulty, there's trouble. That'll be our focus today. A lot of times that produces thorns. It produces bad fruit out of a bad heart in us. But when we view life rightly as we should, through the lens of the cross, through what Christ has done and is doing now for us, then we produce good fruit out of a good heart.

And so the book goes on. We're looking at how people change. Tim Lane and Paul Tripp. And it goes on to give us two chapters on each of those four elements. Heat and thorns and so on.

And so we're beginning today with heat. Heat, the difficulties, the trials that we face in our life, and I hope to cover both of the chapters on heat today. You all know that as we progress through life that we have major events, life-shaping, life-changing events that come to us.

The birth of a child, move to a new city, a car accident, marriage, a church split, a promotion at work, being fired from work, a failing grade on an exam, graduation, the death of a friend or family member.

[1:34] On and on we could go with. Major events in our lives that shape who we are and shape the way that we look at the world. They affect that. They even, often, or sometimes affect what we believe about God.

Our experiences affect what we believe about God. I'm not saying that's the way it should be. I'm saying that's often the way it is.

Practically speaking. We might not admit it, or sometimes we can't see it, but as our authors write, the emotions we feel as we first go through difficult experiences are not static.

They morph into subtle but extremely influential conclusions about God, ourselves, others, and life. We experience something and that produces emotions in us and often we turn those emotions directly into conclusion, into what we consider to be fact.

This is how it is. These major changes in what we believe have not been well thought out. We've not put ourselves into a careful theological re-evaluation.

[2:43] Rather, our unresolved feelings become our interpretations of life. Emotions morph into conclusions. And we end up not believing the things that we say we believe. That's one way we can respond to the heat that comes into our lives.

We can let it shape what we believe, even about God. We can change our practical belief system. Maybe you wouldn't want to admit it.

We believe in the sovereignty of God here. And everything that He does is good. And He does all things well. But perhaps in your latest trial, you've wondered if your problem wasn't bigger than God's ability to deliver you from it.

You've doubted His goodness or questioned whether He really knew what He was doing sending this particular trial at this particular time. Because it couldn't have come at a worse time. And we begin to doubt sometimes in question.

You wonder whether the people around you would really understand the depth of your struggle and so you haven't talked about it. You've asked yourself whether God really cares or is in control. Our authors write, think about your faith.

[3:47] Has it really only been shaped by teaching, preaching, and personal Bible study? Or is there a gap between what you profess to believe and what you actually believe when the rubber meets the road?

Or likely, everyone here, at least at some moment, has had some kind of doubt like that because of what you've experienced, what you're going through. And so we want to talk about the heat today. That's not a good response to the heat, to change what we believe about God, but it happens. And we want to get a realistic view of the world that we live in today. And we'll talk first about God and the real world.

And we know what God thinks because He reveals it to us in His Word. And this Word, this Bible, paints for us a very realistic picture of what we encounter.

It doesn't paint for us some idyllic world where everything is good and everything is happy and where the effects of sin don't touch us. That's not the case. This Bible that so clearly teaches the sovereignty of God.

[4:51] also describes for us stories of murder and rape and famine and disease and judgment and depression and war and adultery and theft and murder, corruption, overwhelming fear, betrayal, backsliding, incest, poverty.

All of those things are in the Bible. What God wants us to understand. What He has revealed to us. And I find that comforting.

The Bible doesn't offer a sanitized version of life or our reactions to it. Dark, shocking and painful stories abound. Scriptures show us people who think, act, plan, decide and speak just like we do. The Word of God speaks into a world that's affected by sin and its consequences and it doesn't try to paint over that like it's not there. Pretend that it's not there. It's very realistic and that's a good thing for you and for me.

Because our world isn't a perfect one. We don't live in some world where everything goes well. We live in a world where bad things happen and we have bad responses to them.

[6:04] It addresses the world as we know it. God's not surprised by anything that's going on in our world today. He's not surprised by any of the troubles that you are facing, that you're encountering in your life.

And Psalm 88 is a picture of that. Psalm 88 is the darkest psalm in the Psalter. Every psalm in the Bible or in the book of Psalms except for this one has some note of hope, joy, comfort.

Even the psalms of lament have something of hope in them but there is nothing of that in this psalm. It's all despair. It's all gloom. It's a very realistic glimpse into the world.

And we're going to read it and I want you to see if you've ever felt this way before. Notice, there's no glimmer of hope here. Psalm 88 Oh Lord, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you.

May my prayer come before you. Turn your ear to my cry for my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave. I am counted among those who go down to the pit.

[7:09] I am like a man without strength. I am set apart with the dead like the slain who lie in the grave whom you remember no more who are cut off from your care. You have put me in the lowest pit in the darkest depths.

Your wrath lies heavily upon me. You have overwhelmed me with all your waves. You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape.

My eyes are dim with grief. I call out to you oh Lord every day. I spread out my hands to you. Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you?

Is your love declared in the grave your faithfulness and destruction? Are your wonders known in the place of darkness or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? Those aren't rhetorical questions where he's assuming the answer is yes.

He's in despair. I haven't seen your love Lord. I'm in the depths of the grave and I don't see your love here. Verse 13 But I cry to you for help oh Lord in the morning my prayer comes before you.

[8:10] He's not saying oh good you've heard me now. The very next verse 14 Oh Lord why do you reject me? And hide your face from me? From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death. I've suffered your tears and am in despair.

Your wrath has swept over me. Your tears have destroyed me all day long. They surround me like a flood. They have completely engulfed me. You have taken my companions and my loved ones from me. Darkness is my closest friend.

Wow. Say I didn't come for that today. I need some encouragement. I need something uplifting. Well you know what? That's the world that we live in.

That's how we feel sometimes. Maybe you felt that way this morning before you came. And this is a song. This is meant to be sung. You see the heading? A song.

A song of the sons of Korah. The sons of Korah led the people of Israel into worship. And as they led them they sang. And this is one of the songs they sang. God wants us to come as we are to worship.

[9:14] Broken. Bruised. Discouraged. And come. And to make that known to Him. When we're feeling like that the last thing you want to do is clam up and hide away and not talk to God about it.

Not talk to your brothers and sisters in Christ about it. You need to bring it to God like the psalmist does. There's deep despair here. There's being forsaken by God. There's not even having any friends around you.

You've taken those away too, God. You're trapped. Bad thing after bad thing. God turned His back on you it seems. Darkness every day. You're about to drown in the waves.

You're not the first one to feel this way. Are you as honest as the psalmist is? Do you acknowledge your struggle and your grief and despair? Do you sweep it under the rug because you know that Christians shouldn't feel that way?

And you know that everybody else around you knows that Christians shouldn't feel that way and if you tell them they're going to think less of you. You shouldn't be in despair. You've got God on your side. And you think, well, somebody's going to say that to me and so I can't tell them how discouraged I am.

[10:16] I hope that we're at least as open as the psalmist is in confessing our weakness, our discouragement, and telling God about it and telling one another about it. The author writes about being in a prayer meeting with people from his church that he knew well.

And something dawned on him. He realized that everyone was giving requests, but they were doing it in a way that didn't reveal anything about themselves. They talked about their difficult circumstances, but they didn't talk about their struggles in those circumstances.

Their response to them. And he writes, Why were we so good at sharing the difficult circumstances we faced, yet so afraid of talking about our struggles in the middle of them? Did we really care more about what people thought than we did about getting help?

I don't think that's always the case here. I think you all do share your burdens with one another. But I think some of us, when the heat comes, we tend to clam up. We don't want to talk about it.

We don't want people to know our weakness. We don't want them to know that we're struggling. We don't even want to tell God about it because we know that we shouldn't feel that way. But that's not the response that the psalmist here has.

[11:28] It's not the response that we should have. And so, in Psalm 88, God welcomes us to come out of the shadows to honestly express our struggles. When we do, we will find that God already knows and understands.

You can't hide your discouragement from God anyway. You may be hide it from your brothers and sisters, but far better to come and to confess it to God. And so, our authors give us five things to learn from Psalm 88.

Let's summarize, and these are on your handout there. God understands the full range of human experience, including crushing sorrow. What you are going through is not beyond God.

He knows. He understands. And then, number two, the promises of the Redeemer. And aren't the promises of the Redeemer sweet? That there is a Savior for God's people.

That He's come to deliver us from our sins. That He'll never leave us or forsake us. Those promises aren't for perfect people. They're not for people who don't face any struggles. They're for us. The promises of the Redeemer come to people who live in a world where such things take place.

[12:38] Number three, the Bible is honest about facing serious difficulty. It doesn't sugarcoat it or pretend like it doesn't exist. And neither should we. Just pretend like everything is okay.

The Bible is realistic about it. And I'm glad. It doesn't excuse poor behavior. It doesn't excuse despair when we serve the God of hope.

I'm not talking about excusing our sinful behavior. I'm just talking about the Bible being realistic about it. And we ought to be too. confessing it to our God.

When we feel, number four, when we feel like the psalmist, like the psalmist, we should go to God in faith and tell Him not run away from Him. And then, the Bible is realistic about the world that we live in.

If life was all easy, if it was all roses and everything's fine, we wouldn't need to talk about this, but the reality is that life isn't that way. My life isn't that way and yours isn't either.

[13:44] And the Bible speaks to us in that kind of world. And so, even when we come to worship like the Israelites did, we come honestly, open before God.

I want to talk for a few minutes about some false assumptions or some false expectations that we carry around that actually make the heat that comes in our life worse. We assume things, or practically, in our minds anyway, we assume things if we would never voice them that make the difficulty and the trial worse.

And one is that we don't deserve it. I don't deserve this. And when that's our mindset, when we think we're a victim of other things around us, but it's certainly not our fault, not our problem, I deserve better than this, then when the trial comes, it's much more devastating.

If we view it as unfair, it only adds to the burden. If we're expecting this, I'm a sinner, and I don't deserve good things in my life. When the bad things come, it won't be a surprise to us. It won't be a shock to us.

That sort of victim mentality will only make the trial worse. Or the expectation that we will have a life free from trouble. Yes, I see that others face trouble, but I really don't think I'm going to.

[15:06] I've planned better than they have. I've ordered my life more neatly than they have. I certainly have God on my side, and so I really don't expect to face trouble in this life.

That sort of expectation will make the trial devastating, and it's contrary to what God tells us in His Word. 1 Peter 4.12 says, Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though some strange thing were happening to you.

Trials aren't strange. You should expect them. Whether it's suffering for the cause of Christ, which I think is what Peter is primarily talking about there, or any other struggle, we should expect heat in this world.

It's a fallen world. And under number two, we're going to talk more about the real world and why we should expect heat. But we should expect it. It's one of the means God is using for our growth and grace for our change.

So when we expect not to have it, then the trial is worse. A third false expectation is expecting the good things we enjoy in this life to be permanent. We've got our home, and we've built our life there, and we think that's always going to be there, and we've got our family, and we're always going to have that, and our health.

[16:13] Boy, I've had my health. And we begin to think those things are permanent, that they're going to last forever. Again, we're going to talk about this in a moment. This world is subject to decay, but these things aren't forever.

And when we view them like they are, when they're taken from us, it's all the more devastating, all the more painful, because we were clinging to this false expectation.

Having the wrong perspective, number four, on things that are good and bad. In reality, difficulty is often hidden in blessing, and blessing is found in difficulty.

Something good comes, and we think, okay, we're good to go, but it turns out to be a trial. Some difficulty comes, and we're almost in despair, but then God marvelously works it for good.

We find that we were mistaken. Having the wrong perspective on that can make life more painful. I think many of us are guilty of number five there, living like we're invincible.

[17:10] Assuming that we have what it takes either to avoid suffering or to get through it. This is just the height of folly and human pride and self-sufficiency. It's only in Christ that we can endure the heat, and we certainly can't avoid it as long as we live in this life.

We say, again, I've planned well. I'm strong. I'll be able to get through this. I can do it. And when it comes and we feel like Psalm 88, we're really disappointed with ourselves. I can't believe I let myself down.

I thought I was stronger than that. I thought I was better than that. I can't believe I let my family down this way. And it's because our hope was in us and not in God. Or trusting, number six, trusting modern technology and convenience to make life smooth, to protect us, to rescue us, and so on. It's fine. It's good to make use of modern technology. I like modern technology. But if we depend on it and think that it's going to make everything in life much better and smoother and easier and safer for us, then we're depending on the wrong thing.

Even by the safest car there is, with all 400 airbags in it for your kids, and all the best crash test ratings, and you can give them a cell phone so that you can always communicate with them and always find them.

[18 : 20] Give them one with the little GPS unit in it where you can track them. And so you always know what they... And so you've put your hope in that. You think because of that that your child is now all of a sudden safe because you've got all this technology.

And so when the car accident comes or your kid knows to take the battery and the SIM card out of the phone so you can't track it and you don't know where they are, or the battery's dead and so you can't call them and something bad happens, you've put all this hope into this technology.

And you're let down and the trial is worse. Again, use the technology. It's great. God's given us minds that are able to create these things and use them. It's wonderful, but don't put your trust in them.

It'll make the trial worse when it comes. This quote is on your handout. He, that is God, invites you to bring your concerns, disappointments, fears, doubts, and regrets to Him.

When life doesn't seem to be working because the heat is too great, run to your Lord and not away from Him. You will find comfort, wisdom, and strength that cannot be found anywhere else. God is not absent in the middle of the heat in your life.

[19 : 31] And don't let your circumstances shape your beliefs to think otherwise. The heat shouldn't change our view of God. We should have realistic views about the heat to begin with in the first place so that when it comes, it doesn't change what we know to be true about God.

Well, are there any questions or comments on what we've covered there? We're going to press on and try to cover the second chapter on this, but before we do, any thoughts on what we've seen so far?

There. Just the thought that sometimes we, what is sin, we manipulate and interpret it as something else. We kind of really want to get through this reality that we don't call sin sin in our lives.

And that leads to our kind of retrival because we're not facing it. Right. Hmm. Not calling sin sin.

When we respond to something bad that happens in our lives in a sinful way and we excuse it away, we say, well, it's not really a sinful response, it's just a human one.

That's how anybody would respond when it's really a sinful response. And that does make it worse because we're now sweeping our sin under the carpet and not dealing with it. Good. Alright, let's press on. Turn over with me to Romans 8.

[20 : 48] We're going to talk about us in the real world for a few moments. And I read the first paragraphs of this chapter and I saw myself in them. God has been showing me lately that one of the idols that I cherish that I live for is life going smoothly.

I don't like bumps in the road or wrinkles in the plans. I want everything to be the way I planned it. It's one of those false expectations that we have that we're not going to face trouble. That's how I want it to be in my life, my family, my church, and so on.

And God has sent some bumps my way and has opened my eyes to one of my idols. and is working on me to help me to deal with it.

But I read this first paragraph or this first part of this chapter on us in the real world and I saw myself there. I'm just going to read a portion of it for you.

It's there on your handout number two. And maybe you see yourself here. What do you expect life to be like? Do you expect an ordered, predictable, calm, where your plans are unobstructed?

[21 : 59] Do you assume that people will agree with you and affirm your choices? Do you think you will be able to avoid sickness, accident, and injury? Do you believe you can plan your way out of stress and avoid situations where you feel overwhelmed?

Our experiences become more difficult when we carry unbiblical and therefore unrealistic expectations into them. It's a reminder of what we've said about some of those mistaken assumptions.

I don't know that I assumed that I could do this, but this is how I want it to be. And God's showing me that there are things that are more important than that. Like trusting in Jesus through the midst of those bumps and trials along the way.

That's why I challenge you to get a hold of this book and read it and profit from it. Maybe you see yourself here, but I think if you read through it, this book is going to squeeze all of us in different places.

And in more than one place, this isn't the first time I've seen myself in the book. I've seen myself plenty here. But I think different ones of us struggle with different things and have different idols. And so the book is going to squeeze you over here when it squeezes me over here.

[23:04] So that's why I encourage you to get a hold of it. I might skip over something that might be particularly a struggle for you. But again, it's such a helpful book.

I'd encourage you to read it. But again, a realistic view of the world that we live in. Let's look at Romans 8, verses 20 to 22. And it shows us that the expectation of a smooth life without bumps and wrinkles is a foolish expectation because, verse 22, we know that the whole creation has been groaning.

Let's go back to 20. Verse 20. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. It describes the world in three ways here.

It's subject to frustration. It's subject to bondage. It's in bondage to decay and the pains of childbirth. And when you look at the world that we live in, isn't that it?

[24:17] It's subject to frustration. And we who live in it are subject to frustration. Things don't go as we had planned. And so we are frustrated. The kids get sick and so we can't go on the trip that we had planned.

Your flight is delayed. It rains on the day that you were going to the beach. And that's frustrating. And you're on your way to the big game, but you get stuck in traffic and you miss half of it. And that frustrates us.

And if there was ever a night when you needed to sleep soundly, it was this one. But instead, the baby is awake and crying all night. And that's frustrating. When Ryan was a baby, maybe, I don't know, less than six months, right around six months, we went over to Cleveland.

And I was going to preach at Fred Pugh's church over there. And we went over on a Saturday and took Ryan with us. And they set us up in Pastor Fred's house.

And his family was there, but he was gone. And so we had Ryan in a pack and play in our room with us. And the boy would not sleep. He was crying.

[25:18] And at home, you know, we just have him in a different room and he could cry for a little bit, but you're in somebody else's house and you don't want to wake them up. And so we're trying to get him quiet. And we're up with him, getting him quiet.

We put him in our bed. And when the kid's in my bed anyway, I feel like I just can't move because if they have fallen asleep, I don't want to bump them or wake them up. And so I had like the worst night of sleep that night.

One of the worst nights of sleep. And I've got to preach the next morning, you know. I've got to preach in a new place. And that always makes me a little nervous because I don't trust God like I should.

And so I was already worked up and then I didn't sleep all night. And then you add to that my pride. I want to make a good impression on these people that have never seen me before. And I was frustrated because I couldn't sleep because I had to preach the next day.

That's the world that we live in. Sin has frustrated the cosmos. And none of us will escape it. Where do you encounter futility and frustration in your life? It happens.

[26:20] It's subject to frustration. It's in bondage to decay. We're dying. That's the reality of it. And everything around us is decaying.

And because we can't escape it, we're in bondage to it. We're enslaved to it. The world is and we who live in it are. And with the best of medicine and fitness and diet, you're still going to die. Your body is going to break down perhaps slowly, perhaps rapidly, but it will.

I'm only in my 30s and I can't do now what I could do 10 years ago. I know, it gets worse. Because your body is decaying.

You know it. You're living it. The things that we make. You know, your family pet isn't going to live forever.

The roses that you bought for your spouse are going to wilt in a week or two. And her memory of them is going to fade too. Because her mind is decaying.

[27 : 24] So two years later, you can't say, you remember, honey? I got you roses. Now, if they didn't decay, maybe you could pull them out again. But she would know, those are the same ones you got me two years ago.

But, you know, they decay and so do our minds. The world is subject to decay. And then the things that we make with our hands, they decay. Your car is going to break down. Or maybe it already did. Maybe slowly. Maybe rapidly. You know, my dishwasher was in bondage to decay. As soon as we moved into the house, it was in bondage to decay.

We were excited because there was a dishwasher. We didn't have to buy one. And we started to run it and water was squirting out of it. And we pushed against the door and that did the trick. And the water stopped squirting out. And you had to do that every time. Thankfully, you didn't have to lean on it the whole time because that that would have been bad. One good shove. But then the latch broke.

[28 : 21] And we couldn't latch it unless we got a paper clip out and started. We got to hook something in there and then pull the latch. And so we did that for a while. And then we realized that we could leave the paper clip in.

And you could just latch it. And then the paper clip fell out and it started working again. And it was like reverse decay for a second. And then we had to wash all the dishes before we put them in the dishwasher, you know.

Because if we didn't, anyway. And then it started rusting the dishes because the metal under the nylon rack started to show through and it was rusting the dishes. Finally, I bought a new dishwasher. But you know what?

That one's in bondage to decay too. So far it works, but it's going to break. Your house is going to need repair. It's just a matter of time. And you can buy the best that money can buy. And all that does is delay the decay a little bit longer.

We find decay in our spiritual lives. Coldness creeps in where once there was a blazing fire and we have to stoke that fire again. And this decay is a source of heat in our lives, isn't it? Sickness is one of the greatest struggles that we face.

[29 : 26] That's your body decaying. And that tries our faith. A broken down car on the side of the freeway with four crying kids inside is a temporary but intense source of heat.

The financial crunch that's created by the need to replace your furnace that just broke in the middle of the coldest week of the winter. That's a source of heat. It's cold, but it's a source of heat because of the financial crisis that it creates and the suffering and the sacrifice.

And when your heart has grown cold, that creates a double trial. Because when the difficulty comes, even the comfort that you once found in Christ doesn't come so easily. And all of this decay, that creates a world of heat for us.

And then there's groaning as in the pains of childbirth. Let me tell you, I know something about the pain of childbirth. Hold on, don't attack me yet. I've been present for the birth of all four of our boys and one of them weighed over ten pounds and had a head like mine.

Big. And he was our first back when we were going to do it without epidural. Oh, yeah. And all that silliness. And I've seen the pain in my wife's face and I've heard it in her voice.

[30 : 41] So I know something about childbirth. I know you're still about to throw rocks at me, all you ladies that have had children. But you know what? Compared to what Erin knows about the pains of childbirth, I don't know any.

Because she's the one that's experienced it. You want to know about the pain of childbirth, you ask her. Or somebody else that's had four kids. Or however many. Any kid, one, is enough to cause that kind of pain.

And in childbirth, we expect that. We expect there to be pain. Ever since the fall, there's going to be pain in childbirth. And maybe we'd understand a woman who went into labor the first time and didn't expect the pain.

Because she'd never experienced it before. But we'd say that she was naive and foolish if the second time around, she wasn't expecting the pain. Although I think God gives women an amazing ability to forget or to bury it or to not care something.

Because if I had gone through what Aaron did with child number one, we would have one child. Not four. But you'd say a woman was crazy if she didn't expect pain in childbirth.

[31:48] But here we are in this world that's subjected to the pains of childbirth and we don't expect it. We think that somehow our life is going to be okay. That we're not going to endure the pain that the other people around us have.

We think that we're okay. You know what? You're as foolish as the woman that's had a child and is about to have another one and thinks that she's not going to endure pain. We're just as foolish. We're just as naïved. And so when the trouble comes, we're shocked and surprised and devastated and we don't learn a lesson.

And the next trial comes and we're just as surprised as we were at the first one. Because we haven't learned. That's the world that we live in. But the picture here reminds us that there's hope at the end of the pain of childbirth is a beautiful baby.

At least it's beautiful to mom and dad. It doesn't make the labor pains any less or the suffering in our tribulation any less, but it does show us that there's good at the end of it.

And God will use it for good in our lives. So we see it in the world around us whether it's in hurricanes or broken relationships or disease or plane crashes or twisted values in our culture or the weeds and thorn that make our work burdensome.

[33:01] We live in a fallen world and it creates heat. And then we add to that our sinfulness and it makes it worse. That's what happened to me in Cleveland. I was subject to frustration and then my own pride made the whole thing worse.

We're sinful. We have sinful responses and Satan is prowling around tempting us to have a sinful response. He doesn't want us to respond well to the heat. He's glad there's heat in this world and he wants it to destroy you.

And that makes it a very difficult situation for us. But there's some lessons that we can learn from Israel's wandering or their time in the wilderness between Egypt and the promised land and then their wandering.

We looked last time at some of their responses. They grumbled when there wasn't water and they complained when there wasn't food and they complained when there was food because they were sick of the man, the man, the man. It's all the same all the time.

We want meat. They complain about that. They blamed Moses and they blamed God and they said, remember the good old days when we were back in Egypt? Wouldn't it have been better then? And they questioned God's faithfulness and they get to the edge of the promised land and they're afraid because there's big people in the land and they don't think they can defeat him.

[34:09] That was how they responded to the heat. Well, what can we learn from that about those responses? Well, we're very good. We're good at this with the disciples, I think, and with Israel.

And looking at them and saying, I can't believe they didn't learn their lesson. Again and again, the Israelites, they fell in the wilderness and those disciples are so fickle and they have so little faith. And we're very good at criticizing from our comfortable chairs and our heated church in the winter and thinking how much better we are than they are. But do you see your responses in Israel's responses?

Have you ever wished for the good old days? and your memory is about as faulty as Israel's was? You ever blamed someone else? Moses, somebody.

I'm going to blame my teacher. It's their fault that I'm not doing well in my class or my boss or my pastor or my spouse or my parents or my kids. We look for somebody else to blame. That's how we respond to these.

[35:07] It's not my fault. We question God's goodness and faithfulness and love. We complain about the provision that God has provided. like the Israelites did with the manna.

I wish my house was bigger. Wish my dishwasher worked better. Hey, you've got a dishwasher. And that's what you want to say to the Israelites.

Hey, you've got manna. You've got food but they complain and so do we. You see your responses in Israel's? You ever wish for the good old days? Blame somebody else. You see what's missing in those responses?

We are. All of the responsibility for our trouble is placed somewhere else. There's nothing about you or your sinful response. We so easily remove ourselves from the picture and blame our circumstances, God or other people, forgetting that our hardship has been made harder by our response to it.

And really, our blaming other people is really blaming God. But God wanted the Israelites to learn something from their time in the wilderness. And so, after 40 years of wandering, He says to them this, and this should be true of us in our heat as well.

[36 : 19] This is in Deuteronomy 8. I think you have the reference there on your sheet. You do. Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these 40 years to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known. To teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

There's four purposes for the heat that comes into our life. God sends it to humble us, to test us, to see what's in our hearts, to teach us, and to discipline us.

So when the heat comes, you ask yourself, has it humbled me? Has it helped me to see my pride and my self-sufficiency and my self-righteousness and shown me how foolish all of that is?

Has it tested me? Has it revealed to me some of the sin that was in my heart that I didn't know was there before? Has it taught me? Have you learned that you need to trust God when things are going really well and when they're going really badly?

[37 : 30] Not just during one or the other so you can avoid those extremes. Trust Him at all times. Have you learned that in your trial? Have you learned about the power of God that He's bigger than any trial that you might face?

No matter how big your sufferings, how hot your heat, that God is able to bring you through it if you were straying, disobeying God when the heat came into your life?

Have you seen it as discipline from God's hand to bring you back? Have you repented of your sinful ways and turned back to God? That's why God sends the heat. To humble us, to test us, to teach us, and to discipline us.

It's all there in that reference. Deuteronomy 8, 2 to 5. And I've got humble speeches and disciplines there. I left out tests. You can add that.

And so, God calls you to turn from questioning Him to examining yourself in the heat. And this quote is on your handout. When you are in the middle of the heat, you haven't somehow gotten yourself outside the circle of God's love and care.

[38 : 38] God is simply taking you where you do not want to go to produce in you what you could not achieve on your own. And we've skipped a quote on there. You can read that when you have time.

If you're still there in Romans 8, I want you to see that there's hope. The beauty of it is that it will not always be this way. I know I've painted a rather bleak picture this morning.

We live in a broken, fallen world. We're subject to decay. There's going to be heat. Life is going to hurt. But it won't always be that way. Which is why Paul's writing, look at verse 18. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. It's waiting. And then he talks about what we've read. Subject to frustration, bondage to decay, the pains of childbirth. And skip down to verse 23.

Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. One day our bodies that are decaying are going to be redeemed.

[39 : 44] And they're going to be perfect. For in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen as no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

We're waiting patiently for the day when the creation will be renewed. When it will be restored. And Jesus started to do that when he came to earth. He healed the sick. He reversed the decay in their bodies.

He caused the blind to see. It's not just a demonstration of his power that he's God. Jesus was showing what he intends to do when he comes again. And that is to restore this world to the way that it was before the fall.

When there's no sickness, no suffering, no trial, no trouble, no heat. It won't always be this way. And that's comforting. That's good.

Because we need that. So, may you be encouraged until then that you're not alone as you face this heat. We're going to get to the cross. But for today, be encouraged that you don't face the heat alone.

[40 : 44] That God walks through the trial with you by His Spirit and will sustain you. He will deliver you. He will bring you through it. Just a word about the back of your handout.

Now, some questions that our authors give us to help you pinpoint some of the particular sources of heat in your life.

It's going to be different for different ones of us. Yes, generally, we all face struggle. We all have trouble. We live in a fallen world. But how does it most particularly affect you? And work through these questions when you've got time.

And they're not profound, but I think they're helpful. And so don't just leave it out there in the realm of the abstract. Yep, I sure do face heat and I need to respond better to it. You pinpoint the heat and then you think about how you respond when you're in those situations or when that particular person has caused you trouble or when this trial has popped up again and again in your life.

Use these questions to determine those areas of life that when God tests you, they reveal sin in you and pray that you'd see God's design for humbling you, for testing you, for teaching you, and for disciplining you as you work through these things.

[41 : 52] Well, may God help us even in the midst of a fallen world to be encouraged that we don't walk through it alone and that there's something far better waiting for us.