Joshua 1:5-6 - This is God speaking to Joshua: *And no man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, and be careful to do according to all the laws.*

I want to read verse 5 again. *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with you, with Moses, I will be with you. I will not forsake you or fail you or forsake you.*

Matthew 28:18-20 - *Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.'* That's a remarkable statement. That means that all the authority that is in heaven, of course, is the Father's; it is no longer the Father's; it is the Son's. You take all the principalities and powers of earth and put them together, and all of their authority, and all the authority of the enemy, and all the authority God might have ever had on this earth, has been wrapped up and handed to Jesus Christ. Yeah.

Verse 19. *Therefore, it ought to be a lead pipe cinch to go out and make disciples of all the nations. You will baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and you will teach them to observe all the commandments, all that I command you. And lo, I am with you, all the day, even to the end of this age.*

John 14:18 - *I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.*

Philippians 1:29 - *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.* By the way, there is a parallel verse to that. I want to read it to you, and I'll tell you what it is in just a moment.

2 Corinthians 1.8 - *We do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened exceedingly beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivers us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us. He on whom we have set our hope, and He will yet deliver us.* I think that many people, no, all of us, cannot really believe that Paul was honest when he wrote this verse. *That we were burdened beyond our strength so that we despaired even of life.*

Philippians 3:10 -14 - *That I may know Him. That I may know Him. That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death…that I may know Him. In order that I may attain to the resurrection out from the dead, not that I've already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that but which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.* Which simply means, I press on to lay hold of the one who laid hold of me. *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Verse 17: *Brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

2 Timothy 2:1-4.*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffering hardship with me, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* Then he threw in a little of the gospel of the kingdom: *No soldier in active service entangles themselves in the affairs of this world, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.* Verse 3 again – *Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

Hebrews 2:10 - *For it was fitting for Him for whom are all things, and through whom were all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through suffering.* An incredible statement. Verse 9 - *But we do see Christ, who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, Jesus; because of His suffering and death, He was crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*. He was crowned with glory and honor, for it was fitting for Jesus, for whom are all things - everything was for Him, and through whom are all things - everything was made by him.

It was fitting for the Lord Jesus in His act of bringing many sons to His own glory, that the Father would perfect Him, the author of our salvation; it was fitting that the Father would perfect him through suffering.

Hebrews 2:18 - *Since He himself was tempted in what he suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.* There is more to that verse than is indicated. It means He has experienced anything you might yet experience. He has been tempted in it, and He overcame it, and He is on a white stallion, rushing to the aid of those who are tempted. I didn't use that just as a metaphor; there is a sight of Him in the book of Revelation, in which He is on a white horse, rushing forward. He was coming to the aid of those who are tempted. He is the aid of those who are tempted in the temptations He was tempted with.

Hebrews 5:8 - *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered, and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of constant salvation.*

Although He was God's Son, He had to learn obedience, and He did so through the things He suffered. Now He is able to bring those who obey him to constant salvation, for we are being saved by His life. We are daily being saved by His life. Every hour you get saved; how? By the human life, Jesus Christ lived on this earth and put all things under that life. That life can conquer, has conquered, will conquer, does conquer, is going to conquer, because it has been through everything.

Lord, we thank you for the deposit of that life, and the absolute assurance that that life can absolutely overcome anything. We need two things, Lord: we need the sight of what is to be overcome, because there's so much we don't even realize is improper, and so much we have never realized awaits us. There's only one other thing we need, Lord. That's your life and the belief that it can conquer all things, no matter how pastel or violent they are; no matter how weak or powerful. Lord, we believe.

Now we'll turn back to Colossians to what has to be one of the most remarkable of all verses in Scripture. Please catch those very first six words: *Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake*. Colossians 1.24 - *Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*

I'll read it again. I, Paul, rejoice that I get to suffer for the church. I get to suffer in my flesh. I get to do my share of suffering for the body of Christ. I get to suffer in the place of my Lord's own body. I get to bear some of the sufferings that He did not suffer, which He did not experience in the body, and His body is His church. I rejoice that I get to suffer and take on suffering that was meant for Him and for His church, in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's suffering.

The next verse says, *For this church*…I kind of doubt that. I think it's *for this suffering I was made a minister*. There are many young brothers in this room who don't even know what suffering is, and yet already find it so difficult with one another. Lord Jesus, they must be faithful men. I petition you, Lord Jesus, to see them through, that they might be able to endure a great deal as soldiers of Christ Jesus.

Let me read now from the synoptic. I think the verse I'd most like you to see is found in Mark 15:33-37. *Now from the noontime, there was darkness over all the land until three in the afternoon. The sun was obscured, and at three o'clock, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabathani," which is translated, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And some of those standing there, when they heard it said, "Behold, this man is calling Elijah." Upon this Jesus knew that all things were ended, and He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," and He bowed His head and said, Father, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." And having said these things, He yielded up His spirit.*

Praise the Lord. It's very difficult for you to sit there and hold in your mind all the things that we cover all at once. Let me see if I can help you.

We are looking at the Lord's… the Roman Catholics call it "His passion," His experience on the cross. And we are in fact taking a look at the Christian life.

Now listen very carefully: In everything He experienced that day, one of two things happened. Either He put what He experienced to death forever, or it became part of His divine nature. I mean, literally, it became God. And I can say to you: the cross became God. It became a living thing, and it became the nature of God Himself. It became part of His very nature. It is His experience. This is what Jesus Christ experienced. This is His experience. Anything the Lord experiences, He either took it away forever, or you will experience it.

Now then, that's true if you live by divine life. I think some of you will recall an illustration I gave you. A brother said to me once, "Gene, you're doing a good job of raising the brothers in the church, and they're experiencing divine life, and one of these days they're going to grow up to the place that they're going to come to you, and they're going just to throw you aside because they have experienced so much divine life. They're going to cast you aside." I scratched my head and thought about that. If they experience divine life, will that be their conduct? It would be if they *stop* experiencing divine life

at a certain point. You can measure, pretty much, brothers and sisters, how much of Christ's experience you will experience.

I have to come back to my Roman Catholic brothers and sisters. I do respect them more every day. They have a lot of symbolic understanding of the Lord's ways. The great masses of the Roman Catholics are separated from the experience. They're told just to sit out there and listen and watch, but there has been a tradition throughout Roman Catholicism that men on earth will make up the sufferings and join in the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. There have been men within the Roman Catholic Church who have experienced that; men who have truly known the fellowship, the agony, and the suffering of Jesus Christ.

You can write your own ticket, brother. It just depends on how far you follow the Lord. Sister, it depends on how far you follow the Lord that you get to fellowship with the suffering of Jesus Christ. Brother Paul drank deeply of the cup of the Lord's suffering. He joined in the fellowship of the Lord's suffering to the point that he was bearing the suffering of Jesus Christ in his own body, experiencing what the Lord Jesus experienced. You get to experience what the Lord experienced. I don't want to just concentrate on the suffering, because you get to experience everything He experienced. So don't be too downcast, but in experiencing everything, you get to experience the suffering.

Would you like to experience His oneness with the Father? Would you like to experience His joy in walking with the Father every day? Praise the Lord. Would you like to experience His experience of living by a life not human? Then, in experiencing that to its fullest, you must also partake in His sufferings.

How did you spend the morning this morning? What have you been doing all morning? There is no better time to start putting your life resources in gear than today. To know Him. To utterly, totally know Him. Out of that knowing will come the fellowship with the suffering. Every day becomes a drive to know the Lord. Every hour, every moment, every word, every watch, everything *is to know Him.* Then you get to have the experience of Jesus Christ.

Now then, we've got to go a little further. Everything He experienced, He either put away forever or made part of His divine nature, and it is for you. It is implanted in you. Please be very clear: anything He experienced, He either put away or made part of His divine love, His own life. That also means that what He put away, He triumphed over, and what He kept and put in His life, He also triumphed over.

Now get clear. Every temptation and weakness in your life has been triumphed over in Jesus Christ. What you need is a gigantic shield of faith. You need to believe that, come to Him every day, and have the keenness of spirit to recognize the sin, weakness, or self in you. Bring it to the Lord with a rifle aimed at one thing. Deal violently. Bring it to Him and believe that His life triumphs over that thing because, in fact, that life has already triumphed over that thing. You are being saved by that life.

You come up to something you can't handle; it's more than you are. It ought to be more than you are. How many things are more than you can handle? Praise the Lord. Everything! We cannot handle anything, and if you do succeed in handling something, you're just going to get really conceited.

Are you succeeding in something? May the Lord have mercy on you. I assure you, the forward movement of the Christian experience in you is coming to an end. Rather, He comes with His own life and lifts you, and He does it for you with His life.

You've got to keep looking at that life. Just keep looking. Keep looking at that life, brothers and sisters. Well, Gene, how can I keep looking at that life? It's really simple: spend the rest of your time, the rest of your life, looking at that life, knowing that life, talking about that life, praying over that life, testifying about that life, reading about that life, experiencing that life, touching that life, knowing that life, looking at that life, and looking at nothing else.

Now then, though we have discussed all these things, there is yet another point. Your Lord, the Lord Jesus, was going up that mountain carrying the cross, and then having it carried for Him, and then laid on that cross, and for six hours crucified on that cross, and He had never before experienced this. It was suffering, and He had never known suffering like this. He had never touched this. His humanity had never been exposed to this kind of treatment. He could have slipped at any moment. He could have fallen. Praise his name. He didn't.

Worthy is the Lamb. He didn't; He could have, but there was something else he had to do. He had to write history for a new species. He had to not only get through the cross, but take it to a level humans had never experienced. He had to take it on a high level. A high, high, high plane…and He did. He did it. How? By drawing life from the Father, by drawing the Father's divine life, by not, for one minute, depending on what? His own human life, and by beholding the Father's conduct; seeing what divine life would do in a case like this.

Lastly, all of these experiences were profoundly altering Jesus Christ. All of them were altering His humanity and His divinity. Everything He was going through was altering the Lord Jesus. Everything in Him was being changed. He was not becoming angry; He was not becoming proud that He could do it. Every moment, His own nature, His human nature, was being put away. He had denied that nature from the day He was baptized; maybe He had done it all his life, I don't know, but He had denied His human nature from the day He was baptized.

From that day, He took everything that came to Him and turned it to the Father without letting it come to His own glory. Without ever letting them centralize in Him, He turned everything to the Father. You may say He was a channel, and that disturbs some people because a channel is lifeless, but there was an incredibly powerful life in there, turning things to the Father. There was an incredible life in there being denied. There was battle going on inside that channel. There's a war inside a channel that's a channel only, and yet He was a channel only: to let all things come to the Father. He was denying himself - *not I; I can do nothing apart from my Father*.

Little by little, day after day, every time the Lord came to a new situation, His life was denied, and the Father's life was inserted into that situation. Therefore, at that place, this much of His life was put away forever. Then more of His life was put away. Every experience put more of His life away, and he gained the victory over His life, and that's over forever. But the further He got along the road, and the closer He got to the cross, the bigger the things left were. The big things were what was left, and the

danger grew with every moment. It's like drilling - the deeper you drill, the harder the rock. By the way, the hotter the heat.

There was only a little left, but the Father had to do away with the Lord's nature. The Lord Jesus was cooperating, but it was more difficult to cooperate. You've got to recognize: He was total divinity, but He was also total humanity…and you're seeing humanity at war. Now, everything that happened to Him brought greater humility into his being. He was being brought lower and lower and lower. He was bringing himself lower and lower through personal submission and obedience. He obeyed the suffering, and the suffering brought him lower.

God wanted a son, but divinity isn't like humanity. If humanity wants a son to sit on the throne, what does humanity do? Spoil the kid from the day he's born; accelerate his unique personality. What does God want in the way of the Son? He wants one brought low, and lower, and lower, until there's so little left of him…and then there's nothing. And then…there is divinity, and divinity, by its nature, is humble. Divinity by its nature is humble, and when the Lord Jesus had denied it all, the Father was faithful to exalt Him above all things, all men, all living creation. But in the Father's exaltation of Him, the Lord Jesus lost none of the inwrought humility. It stayed, and the most exalted One in the universe is in fact the most humble One in the universe. Glory to him.

Every moment He was living, the Father was whittling away at His life. I want you to know that even the Lord Jesus did not know how much that would make. I think perhaps even the Lord was surprised at the strength of human nature. I think even the Lord was amazed at what the Father would have to do to break human strength in its totality. Never once did Jesus Christ let glory redound to Himself - it went to the Father.

The pressures were not always incredibly intense, but He'd win a victory, and the Father would lay a harder test on Him, then a harder, then a harder test. Each time, the life of God got stronger in him, and each time God tested the divine life in him with a greater test. That's why you'll never get any rest in the Christian experience. God will throw you a little cross, and you'll gobble it up and beat your chest. It'll no more have taken, and He'll give you another cross, and one day you get uncomfortable.

On that day, you start looking for a way out and start blaming me for some problem you've got. You understand what I'm saying: I am one of the problems you've got…and you're one of the problems I've got. He then keeps giving harder and harder ones because with each one the divine life becomes more resilient. But boy, I'll tell you, one day - and we talked about it - as the divine life grows, the human life grows in pride of what the divine life is doing. And one day, one of the two has got to move ahead, and that's when things aren't fun anymore.

The divine life grows from a baby; the self-life was already full-grown, and it watches the little divine life coming. It's a little uncomfortable, but it gets prouder and prouder. "Look how spiritual life is coming. See me growing up in Christ?" One day, there's got to begin a life-and-death struggle between those two lives. Somewhere out there is Gethsemane, brother and sister. And not one…but many.

I want to tell you something: you will have more Gethsemanes than the Lord did. He only had to have one. Because you've got many things to put away, over and over and over, and you'll call a lot of

things Gethsemane. The fact is, they're not really, but you'll sure think they are. You'll be tested again and again and again, and one day you'll have a real, genuine Gethsemane… if you obey the Lord all the way; if you truly take up your cross and follow him. There are no guarantees that you will obey him to the end. His word will constantly be speaking to you, and there will be constant new problems…and new crosses. Suffice it to say, every time you get a little further with the Lord, your spirit will be strengthened; the Lord will test it more. That's what he did to the Son.

Now then, the final hours come, and God has reserved the greatest test for his Son. Praise the Lord. I want to review just a little of what you have seen on the cross. I don't know if you're getting clear, but on the way to the cross, the Lord Jesus' thoughts were on someone other than himself. His thoughts were on Jerusalem, on the church, and on the daughters of Jerusalem, and on those women, and on you and me. If this is what a green tree will do, what will a dry tree do? He didn't know, I guess, Himself, but if Israel did this to its King, what would the Roman Empire do to peasants like his followers?

Brothers, sisters, here is the point of that experience: that you, as a Christian, must grow to the point that you outgrow your own consciousness of your suffering, and become conscious of the needs of others; that your suffering is made up not of what's been put on you, but your agony is for what is put on others. I believe that most of us have that ahead of us.

In the act of the excruciating pain first touching his body, what is he saying? Father, forgive them. Where is the centrality of Jesus Christ? No. It's on them. Where is the centrality of the two thieves when they're being crucified? Upon themselves. They're crying, they're begging, and they're cursing and blaspheming. The Lord is raised on the cross. A great crowd of people is out in front. Where is the centrality of Jesus Christ? It's on His mother and on John. The suffering He is going through reaches a new height; His agony is for others, not for Himself. In fact, He did not deserve any of that suffering, but He went, and He took it. It was uncalled for, but he took it.

Now, brothers and sisters, to grow up, to suffer, only for others. When all suffering is involved in others, you don't allow yourself the privilege of having spiritual needs. If there is down, it's down for others. The passion is for the church, for His people, and in your case, His own suffering for His people. There is no luxury of personal spiritual needs; personal feeling, personal littleness. I believe you understand. We have a way to go, but praise the Lord: we see, and to see is the first step. Then see…and die.

That was not all. How impersonal Christ was on the cross to Himself. How "other" referenced He was. When He was just about to die, where were His thoughts? It was on the thief. He paid no attention to His own need; it was on the thief. Suffering - unconscious of suffering for Himself. That was the standard He raised. You better get ready - He will ask it of you one day.

It brought him so dependent on his Father. For a man in his condition wants to turn to Himself, does he not? But it took such meekness. It took such untrusting in himself. It took such nothingness. It took such "other" consciousness to turn; it took such trust in the Father's life. It took such meekness, such willingness to turn to the Lord, His God, and draw strength. To have no thought except for another. Let

the suffering be for another. When the church ever gets that strong, filled with that kind of experience, she'll be unstoppable and beautiful. She will really be filled with faithful men and women.

At this moment, He won the run to be sin-bearer. He had gotten past the mocking; God had gotten past being beaten; God had gotten past being cursed and blasphemed. He'd gotten past being crucified with nails…He'd gotten past the pain. He was still not depending on His own life, and He was becoming more and more the humbled one, the humiliated one, the naked one. He was giving in to it all constantly. He was gaining Sonship by the minute. He was gaining Kingship by the second. He was learning obedience to the suffering, and the suffering, the sheer hellish agony of it, was changing Him. Pain itself changed Christ; it alters a man.

Suffering changes. Why would we escape? Pursue it, brother. Sister, embrace it. It is your salvation. It is woven into the nature of your Lord. Divinity suffers. He did not take suffering to the grave; He made it His handmaiden to bring many sons to glory. Suffering is God's instrument to make you conform to His Son, who was Himself conformed by suffering. He made it an instrument of His Father to make you a son. Hallelujah for what He did. What a Lord you've got. Praise God, He won grace to get through it.

I have watched many dear Christians suffer, and I've never seen one of them with enough grace to get through it. Not one. I've seen brothers and sisters in the crucibles; I've never seen one with the strength to get through. I'll tell you something very strange: they get through. They get through. What was it? It was the strength and life of God. What you were wanting was a buggy (easy) ride. Is that not true? A buggy ride, and because it wasn't a buggy ride, you thought the grace and the power were not there.

The grace and the power are hidden, but they're there. If you allow the Lord to work in your life…you'll make it, brother and sister. You'll make it through anything, and you'll come out saying, "Grace. Grace. Grace," because you know you never would have made it. As far as that goes, you're certain you're not. You thank the Lord when He puts so much on you that you know you can't make it. Then the grace, the power of His indestructible life, the power He won by His conduct on the cross, steps in.

Hallelujah to the Lord, He is winning more and more by the minute, until finally He wins the greatest honor, and from this point on, it cannot be taken from Him. He wins the right to be sin-bearer…sin-bearer. And God puts on Jesus Christ your sin.

(continued in Part 2)