

Celebrating 50 years of Proclaiming Christ
BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Suffer Now or Suffer Later

Philippians 1:28-30



- And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. ²⁹
For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; ³⁰
Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.





Philippians 1:28

- **And in nothing terrified by your adversaries:**

Refers back to v. 27





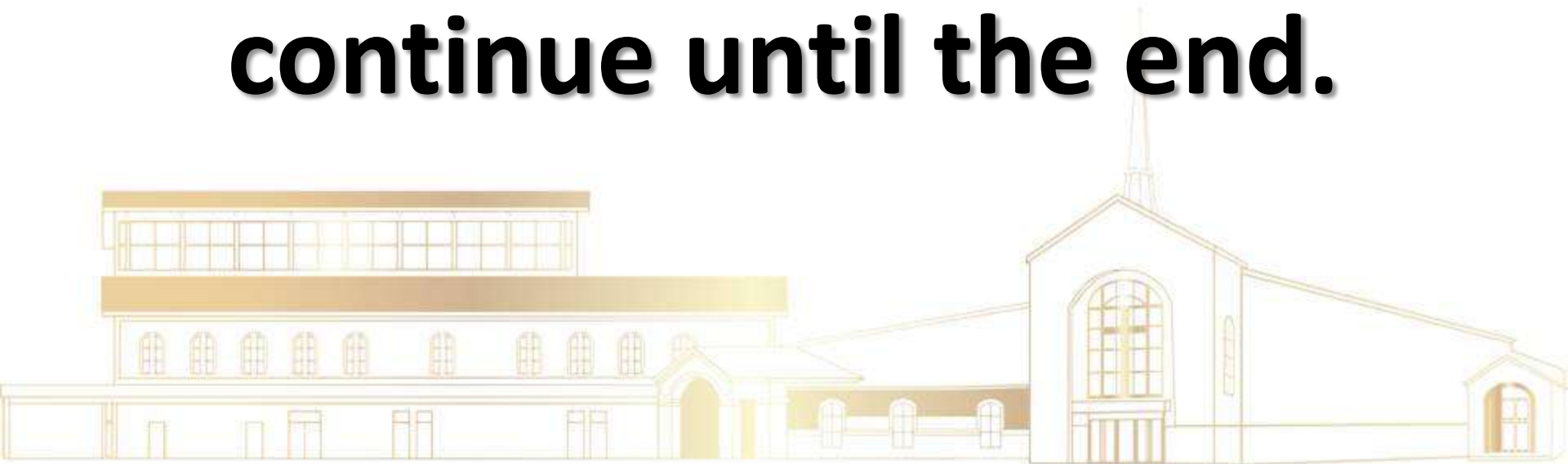
Philippians 1:27

- that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

V. 28 is a continuation of the instructions in v. 27—remember Paul didn't insert the v. numbers

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**From the beginning the
church has had its
adversaries and that will
continue until the end.**





Philippians 1:28 (NET)

- and by not being intimidated in any way by your opponents.



**Next notice that Paul says
the way we stand up for
the gospel w/o being
intimidated will be a sign.**





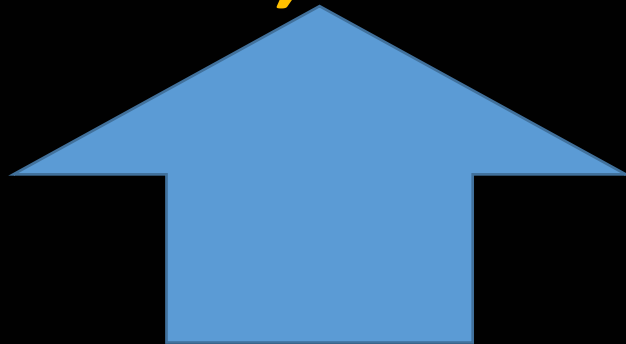
Philippians 1:28 (ESV/AV)

- This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.
- which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.



Philippians 1:28

- And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.



ἀπώλεια

Transliteration*apōleia***Pronunciation**

ä-pō'-lā-ä (Key)

**Part of Speech**

feminine noun

Root Word (Etymology)

From a presumed derivative of ἀπόλλυμι (G622)

Outline of Biblical Usage [?]

- I.* destroying, utter destruction
 - A.* of vessels
- II.* a perishing, ruin, destruction
 - A.* of money
 - B.* the destruction which consists of eternal misery in hell



Philippians 1:28 (ESV)

- This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

At this point, we are going to look at v. 29 and then at a similar text from Paul to gain a better understanding v. 28.

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Only Two Options

1. Complete and total destruction—that is annihilation.
2. Eternal separation from God in a place called hell.





Philippians 1:29

- For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should **not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,**

“It is a fact that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world today. In view of the fact that 215 million Christians in 108 countries currently suffer from various forms of persecution, four out of every five people who are oppressed because of their faith are Christians, and in 2015 in Iraq, a Christian was murdered every five minutes because of their religious beliefs.”



**Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary, October 12,
2017**

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**Paul was very familiar
with suffering for
Christ—Remember
Acts 9:16**



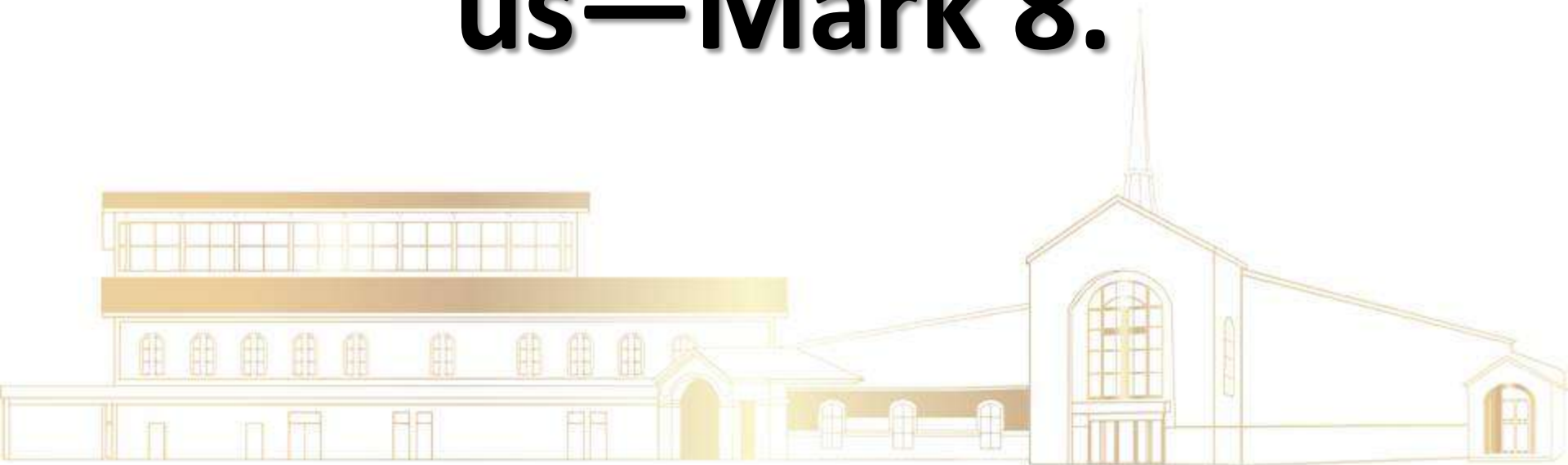


Acts 9:15-16 (NKJV)

- But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

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**Let us never forget that
our Savior suffered for
us—Mark 8.**





Mark 8:31

- And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

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Turn over to
2
Thessalonians
1:4-8





2 Thessalonians 1:4 (ESV)

- Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

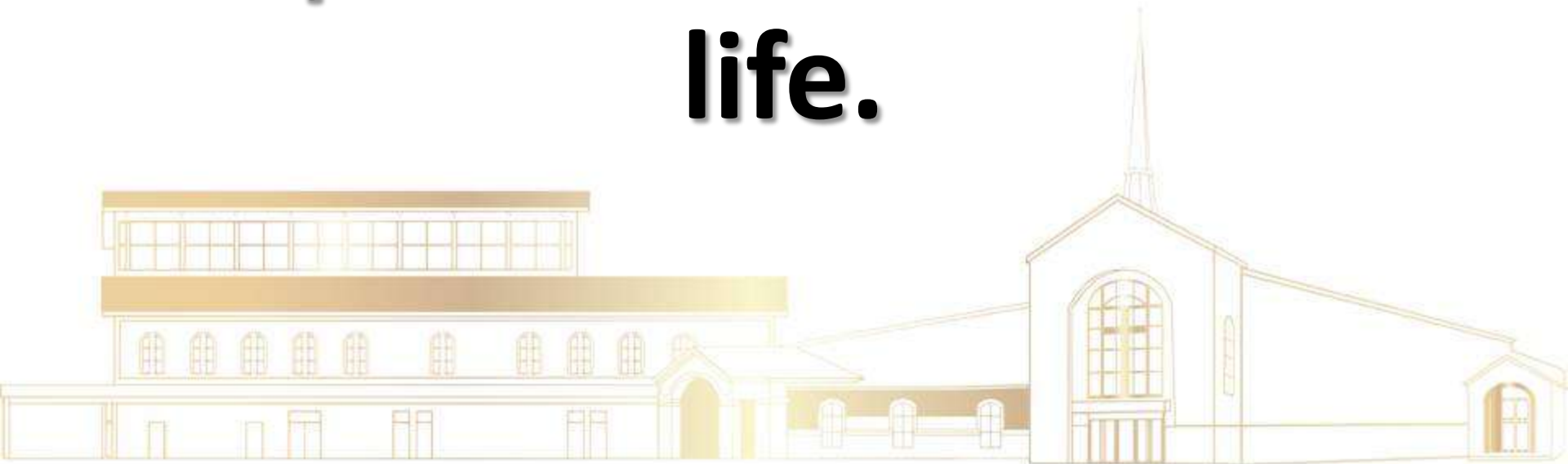


2 Thessalonians 1:5 (ESV)

- This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—

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Suffering is part of life.
And suffering for Christ
is part of the Christian
life.



Suffering for Christ Must

Be distinguished from:

- Stupid Decisions
- Irresponsible Choices
- Sinful Behavior
- Repercussions of living in a fallen world



We must be very careful in what we say concerning suffering. Assigning God responsibility for all suffering in the world will not do.





2 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

- since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

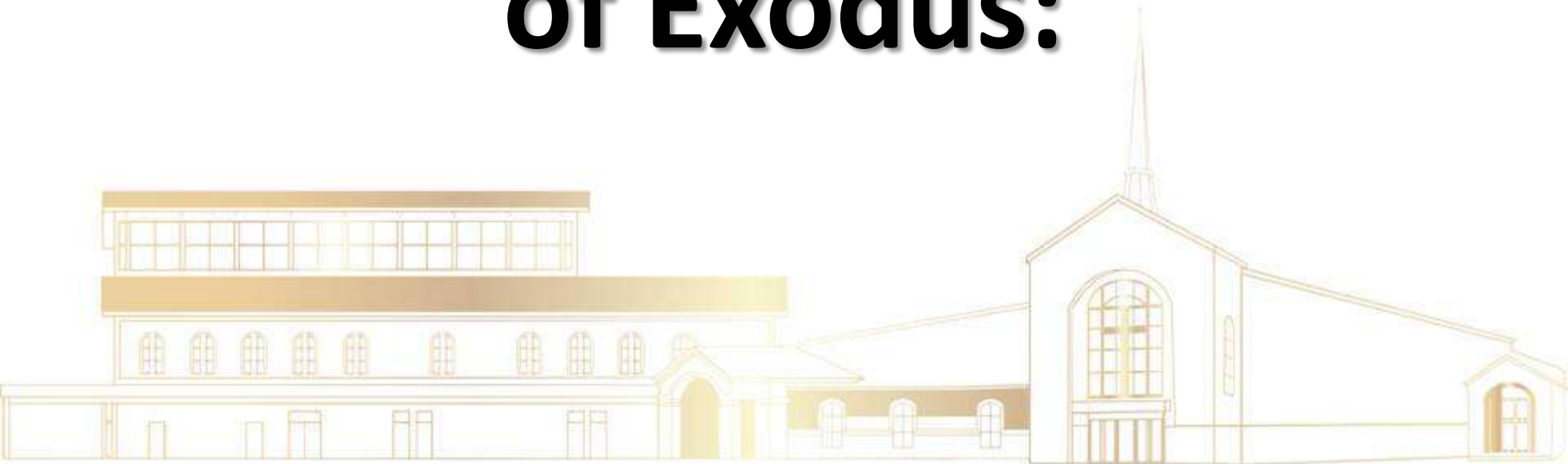


2 Thessalonians 1:7 (ESV)

- and to grant relief to
you who are afflicted
as well as to us, when the Lord
Jesus is revealed from heaven with
his mighty angels

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**At this point I am
reminded of our study
of Exodus:**



Exodus 3:7

Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,





2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (ESV)

- when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels
- in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

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**Coming with mighty
angels, in flaming fire, to
inflict vengeance should
scare the 'mess' out of
anyone.**



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Since the beginning of the church there has always been a group of 'Christians' who in the name of defending God's character have sought to minimize several things.



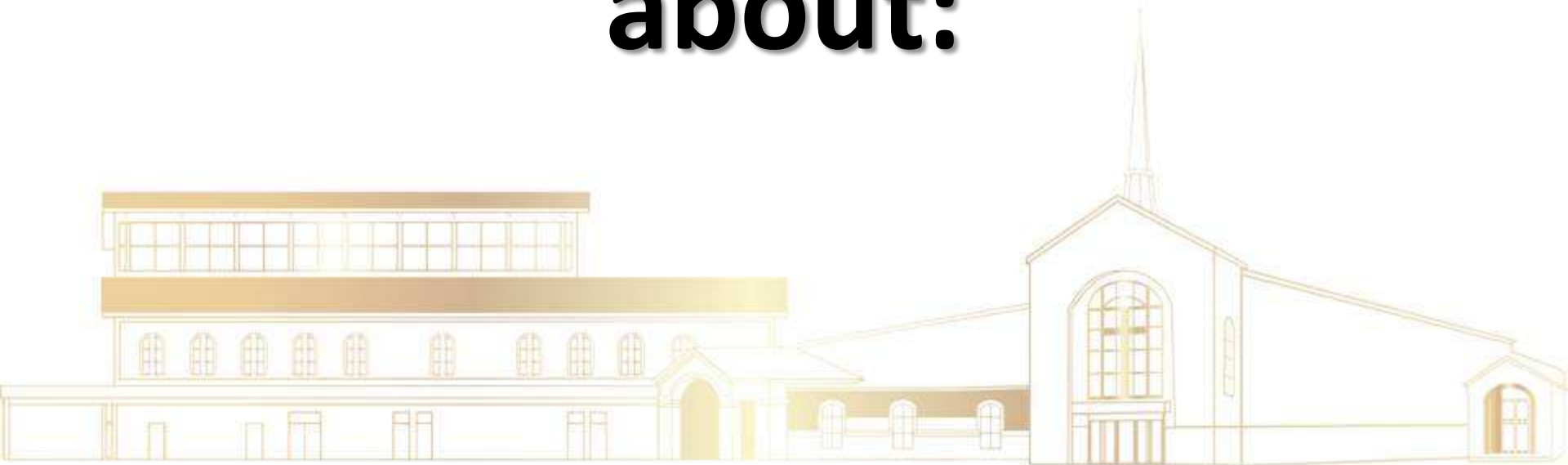
Minimize

- God's Sovereignty
- God's Responsibility for Suffering
- God's Judgment and Eternal Punishment



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**Here is one example of
what I am talking
about:**



Lately I've been thinking about life. A lot.

I've also been thinking about the line we tell people when they're going through sad chapters in life: "Well, this is all part of God's plan."

But is it, really? Is *all this* part of God's plan? Looking back at the times people have said this to me in the midst of suffering, I find myself shaking my head that we'd believe such a thing.

Not only does that line fail to bring me comfort, it also seems to impugn God's character. The idea that a loving God would have a "plan" that involved wiping out thousands in earthquakes and tsunamis, giving people cancer, parents losing children, car accidents, trauma, abuse, and all manner of pain and suffering, is an insane idea.

Think about it: if this is all "according to God's plan" and every life event is being directed and controlled by him, *he's really bad at making plans*.

In some of my saddest seasons of loss, people have come along side of me and said, "Well, we'll never really understand God's plan."

And every time I hear it, through my tears and suffocating sadness I just want to reply, "*No____, Sherlock*." How could a plan that involves so much heartache be understood?

Sure, I understand what we're trying to do when we say it. We're trying to make ourselves or others feel better, and trying to make sense of sadness and suffering. The best way we know how? Apparently it's to believe that our suffering was all planned by God, and thus must have some deeper, mysterious beauty we haven't discovered yet.

Sometimes we'll say God planned the suffering for our benefit. Other times we'll be tricked into believing that God planned the suffering to chastise us for not measuring up. Yet, no matter how we try to rationalize or explain it, we end up at the same spot: if this is all part of God's plan, God is the author and cause of evil and suffering.

As well meaning or desperate for answers as we may be, trying to fit all of the tragedies and sadness of life into some supposed master plan that God has, creates far more problems than it solves.

I am convinced that any belief or worldview that makes God the agent of causation for our suffering, ought to be rejected. This includes the idea that God has a giant master plan where everything that happens in life is divinely willed and ordained as part of it. In a world of such brokenness, this simply cannot be true.

Instead of saying that God has a “plan,” I am growing more fond of saying that God has a certain desire, a certain will– a certain heart. And that this will, this desire, and this heart, is *always love*. It’s never anything *but love*. This means that whatever God wills, and whatever God desires to bring into reality, is always beautiful and never evil.

God does not will our heartache and suffering. He doesn’t will our losses, and the broken chapters we experience in this life.

Those things have nothing to do with God, and are so far outside of his will, his desire, and his heart, that it’s indescribable.

Instead of trying to rationalize our suffering as being from the hand of God– thus making God an agent to be petrified of instead of a creator to be loved, I think we should be quicker to acknowledge that, no, a lot of what we experience in life isn’t God’s plan at all.

And honestly, we really need to stop blaming him, because we pin some really horrible and tragic life events on him. I can’t imagine it makes him feel good when we actually believe that he caused that car accident, sent the tornado, or gave the cancer in order to fulfill his own really twisted “plan.”

Instead, when we acknowledge that really hard and sad life events did not come from the hand of God, and were not in any way planned by or ordained by God, I believe we’re invited to get to know a God who *joins in our suffering instead of causing it*.

Because you see, if it's outside of God's heart and desires, God grieves that loss and brokenness with us— because it's his hopes and dreams for our lives that end up getting smashed as well.

I don't know how to have a relationship with a God who comes along side me in sadness and suffering and says, "You're going to have to trust my reasons for making your world explode."

But I am learning (I'm trying Ringo. I'm tryin' real hard), how to have a relationship with a God who sits beside me and says, "Yeah, man... this whole thing totally sucks."

Instead of this idea of God having a master plan that meticulously dictates and controls what happens in our lives (often referred to as blueprint theology), I believe that God has hopes, dreams, and desires for our stories. When those things come true, he rejoices and celebrates with us.

But when those hopes and dreams get smashed to bits, instead of saying "Oh, by the way— I actually did that," I believe God sits in the dark and mourns those broken dreams with us.

And when the tears have subsided long enough to begin to hear his voice clearly, I'm convinced he's also whispering, "And I know this can't replace your loss, but when you're ready I'd love to partner with you to try to make something good come out of all this."

Minimizing Hell

- Traditional hell is a misinterpretation of Scripture
- Hell is a creation of man
- Hell is on the earth
- In the end everyone gets saved



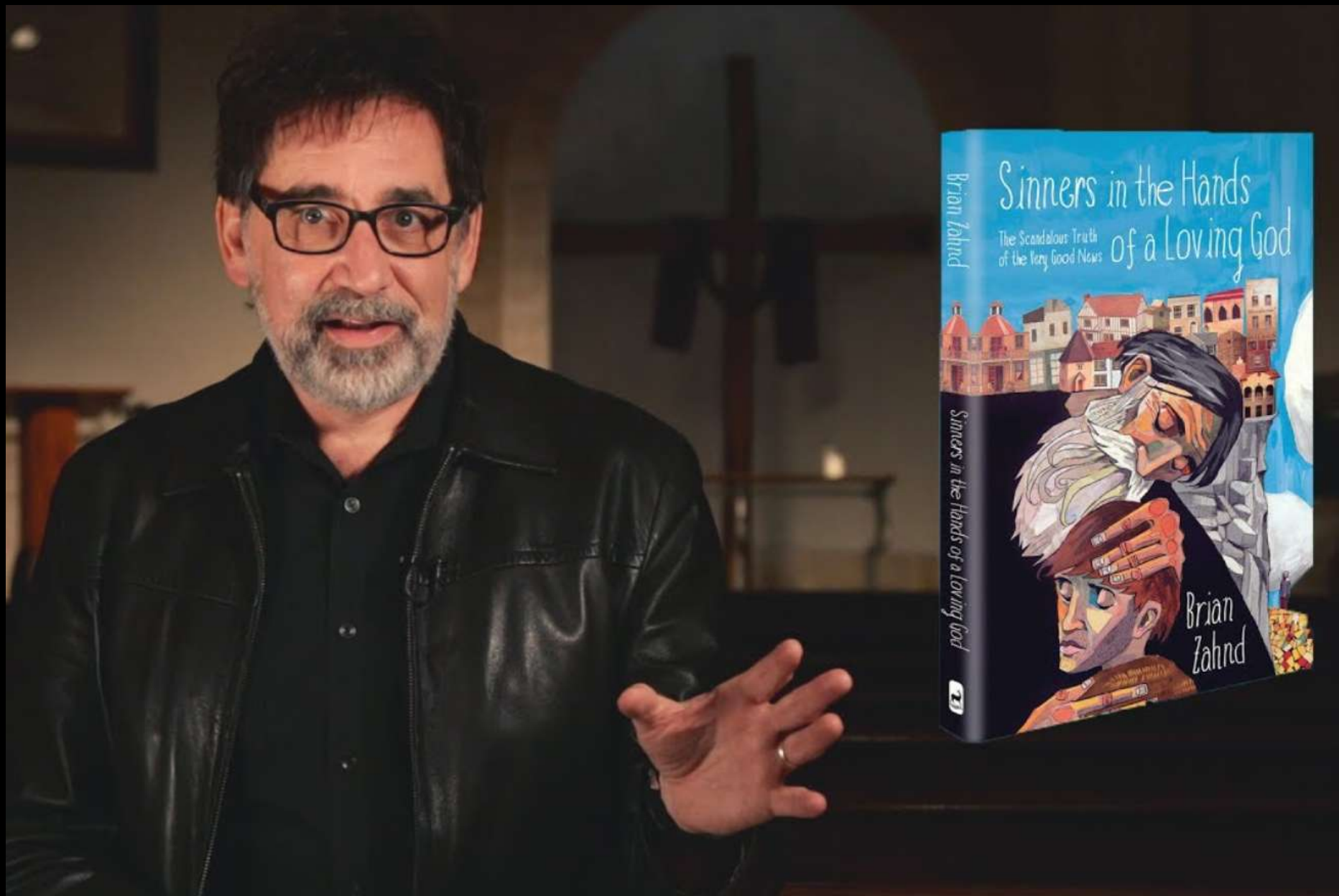
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**Before we continue let
me remind you of three
things from the Bible
concerning hell.**



1. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels NOT humans. Matt 25.41.
2. Christ made it clear there are degrees of punishment in hell. Luke 10 & 12.
3. You don't have to go there!





Brian Zahnd, Word of Life Church

Yes, I know *Sinners In the Hands of an Angry God* well. I had portions of it memorized. It was part of my preacher's arsenal. But long ago I came to regard evangelism by terrorism as immature, manipulative, and unfaithful to the God revealed in Christ. Today I preach *Sinners In the Hands of a Loving God*. At some point we have to decide which picture of God we will embrace and project.

How do we go about choosing? Both pictures can be drawn from the Bible. We do it by asking which picture looks like Jesus. Every other vision of God — from whatever source — is subordinate to the revelation of God we find in Christ. This is why the Apostle John will say no one has ever seen God until they see him revealed in the Word made flesh: Jesus Christ (see John 1:18)

Does the sadistic monster in the “Angry God” sermon look like Jesus? Of course not. So we are free to reject it. We *must* reject it!



2 Thess 1:7-8

But does this mean the wrath of God doesn't exist? No, of course not. The wrath of God exists. But there are important clues, even in the Old Testament, to how we can better understand the wrath of God. For example consider Psalm 7:11-16...



2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (ESV)

- and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

God is a righteous judge;
God sits in judgment every day.
If they will not repent, God will whet his sword;
he will bend his bow and make it ready.
He has prepared his weapons of death;
he makes his arrows shafts of fire.

These three verses make it sound like God directly visits retribution upon sinners. But look at the next three verses...

Look at those who are in labor with wickedness,
who conceive evil, and give birth to a lie.
They dig a pit and make it deep
and fall into the hole they have made.
Their malice turns back upon their own head;
their violence falls on their own scalp.

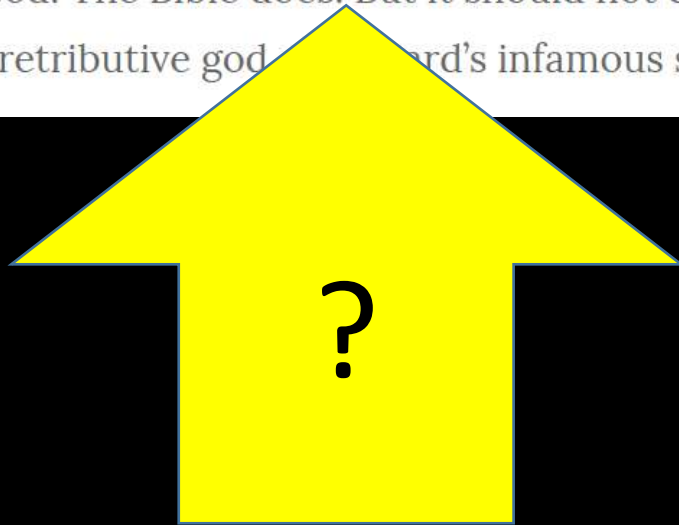


2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (ESV)

- and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

The psalmist shows that what we might think of as God's whetted sword is in reality the pit of self-inflicted punishment that we dig with our own hands.

Sin has consequences. We dig a pit of sin...and eventually we fall in. We act in malice...and eventually it returns to haunt us. We employ violence...and eventually it boomerangs back on us. We can call this the wrath of God. The Bible does. But it should not cause us to think that the Father of Jesus is the vindictive and retributive god of the Old Testament's infamous sermon.





Revelation 19:15 & 21

- And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
- And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Yes, sin has consequences, and sometimes they are truly horrible consequences. But the deeper truth is that we are more punished **by** our sins than **for** our sins. Jesus has made this known to us. Jesus tells us that the Father is kind and merciful...even to the evil and ungrateful. (see Luke 6:35–36)

What I want to tell you is that God's attitude (spirit) toward you is one of unwavering, unconditional, fatherly/motherly love. You have nothing to fear from God. Let the fear of God be understood as the wisdom which recognizes that reality as God has created it has consequences. But the truth that we live in a consequential universe with a moral arc, does not mean that God views sinners as loathsome spiders. He does not. God looks with unconditional love upon all his sons and daughters... even his prodigal sons and daughters.

**If we are more punished by our sins
than for our sins is the deeper
biblical truth—why did Christ die
“for our sins”?**

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- 1. The Bible does not teach that God's love is unwavering and unconditional toward all people at all times.**
- 2. Everyone should fear God. Hebrews 10:31.**
- 3. If we live in a consequential universe w/ a moral arc God created it that way and it—the moral arc is God NOT God.**
- 4. I agree the Bible does not teach God looks at sinners a loathsome spiders.**



Hebrews 10:31

• *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*



This is good news. This is the gospel. Let's preach it.

???????

BZ

(The artwork is a detail from Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son*, c. 1665.)



Amada Zacarias-Guerra

This is the God I choose to believe in! The loving merciful God. There are so many examples in the Bible, so many examples Jesus left us. The soldier who had his ear cut off, the Samaritan woman, the washing of the feet and many other examples of love, forgiveness and humility. It makes me very sad to know that so many people distort and slant the messages in the Bible to fit their own ideas and agendas. But people have always done that and I suppose always will. Thank you for posting this, I am very happy to read this today.

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**At this point I want you
to see the GIANT
implications of Zahnd's
teaching...**



It is an undeniable historical fact that Christians have been persecuted for their faith in Christ since the beginning of the church.



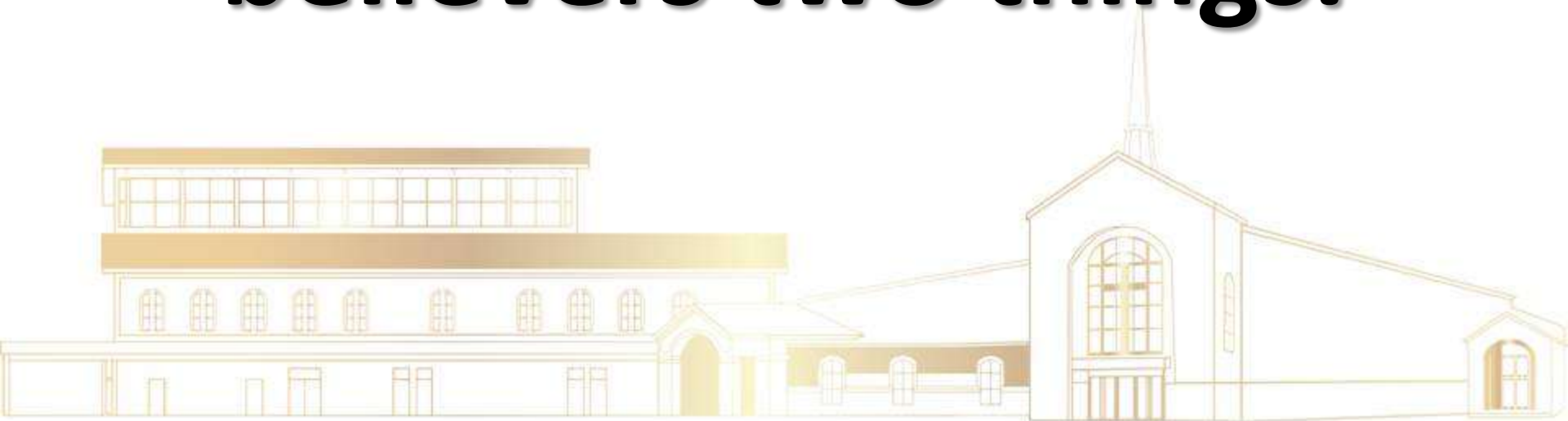


John 15:20

- Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, **they will also persecute you;** if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

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**Our text specifically
states that God granted
believers two things.**





Philippians 1:29

- For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

1.To believe
2.To suffer



Luke 21:12

- But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

**If Brian Zahnd is correct—
Christians must suffer now for
being a follower of Christ, but
God will not punish unbelievers
and worse yet those who
persecuted Christians get off
scot-free. However...**



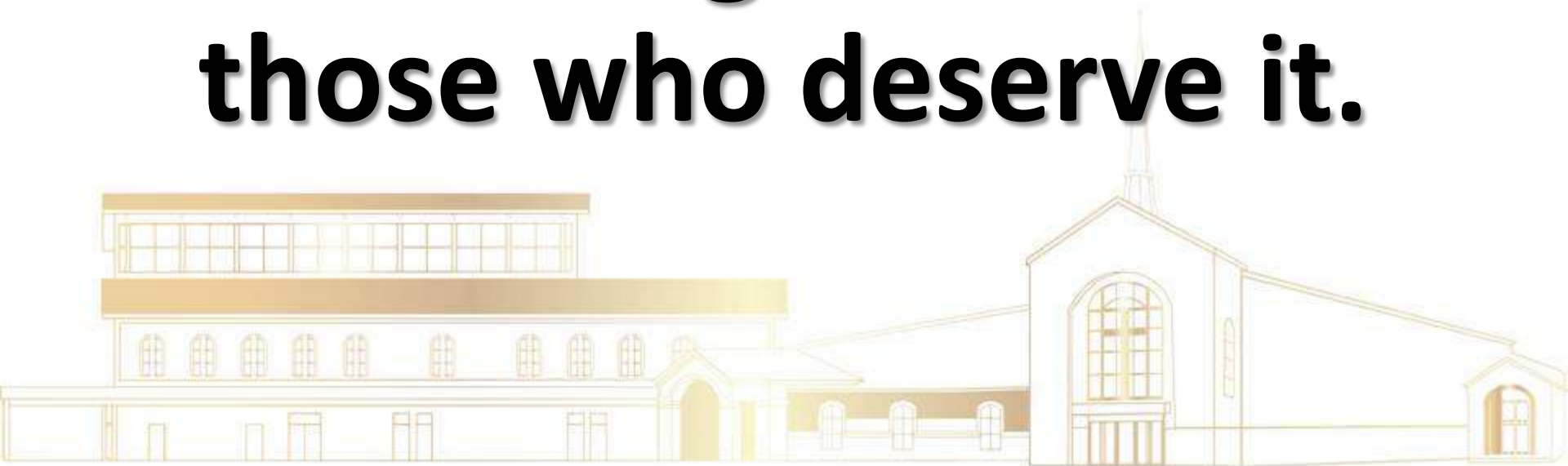


2 Thessalonians 1:8 (ESV)

- in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

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**Notice their destruction
is from God—He is
afflicting wrath on
those who deserve it.**



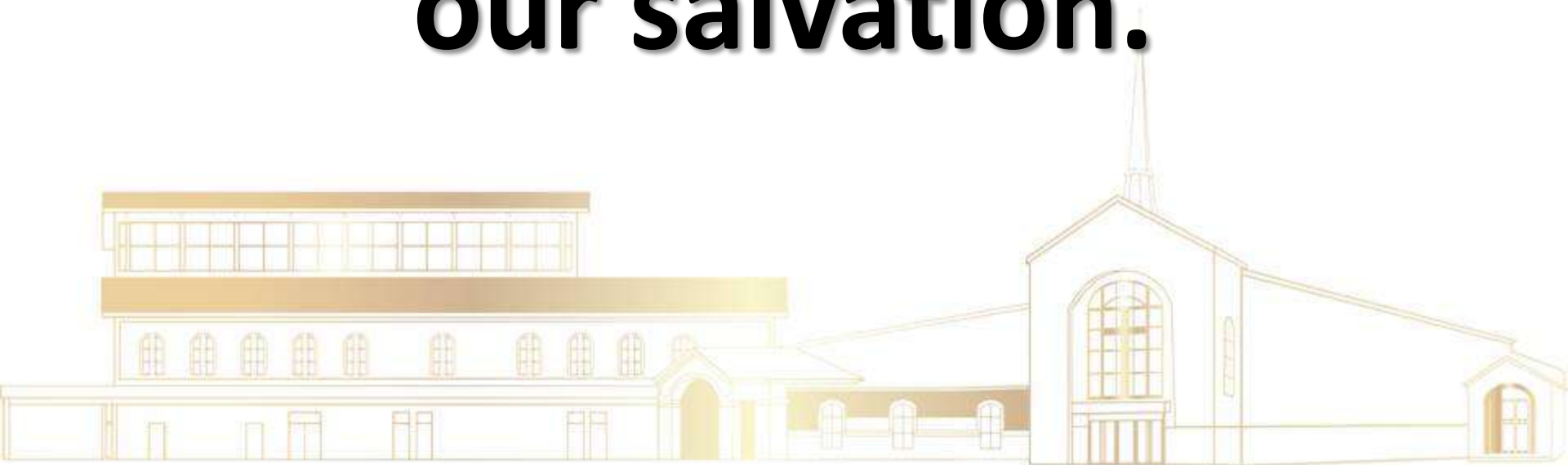


Philippians 1:28

- and not frightened in anything by your opponents.
- This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

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**The way we suffer for
Christ can be a sign of
our salvation.**





Philippians 1:28

- and not frightened in anything by your opponents.
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**What do you do with
men willing to die for
their faith?**





**I am not talking suicide bombers.
That is NOT the same kind of die for your faith.**

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**How does God use
suffering in the life of
the believer?**





2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (ESV)

- For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

Romans 8:18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

