



WEEK 4 - THE AGONY OF DEFEAT PART II - MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

If you ever played high school sports, what was your greatest win you remember? What was your most memorable loss?

SHARE

Welcome to our ongoing series called “Tailgating.” If you have ever been tailgating before a football game, you will recognize a few important differences between the casual fans and the sold-out fans. Sold out fans love tailgating, the game isn’t enough, these fans need extra hours prior to the game to chest bump, cheer, eat, and talk about their team. The sold-out fans aren’t afraid to let everyone else around them know whom they follow and no matter what the score may be, they aren’t going anywhere. The casual fan, however; tends to blend into the crowd and from the outside you’re not really sure what side they are cheering for because they rarely speak up or wear anything in public in which they would be recognized as sold-out fans. Jesus called us to be fanatical, sold-out followers.

Win or lose, sold-out fans don’t give up on their team. As we follow Christ, there will be times where we feel like we are losing and don’t understand why things seem to be falling apart all around us. Then there are those times where we see what God is doing and clearly see the direction we are going. During those times it feels like life couldn’t get any better, we are full of joy and are full-hearted in our pursuit after God. So what do we do when we feel like we are stuck in those difficult times? What does God’s word say to us about going through troubles?

Read:

Matthew 11:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9 and John 16:33

What are we to do when we feel tired and stressed out?

When Jesus says, “Come to me, “ what does that practically look like?

How is God’s power made perfect?

How have you experienced God’s grace being sufficient in your life? (*Maybe one person from the group can share their story*)

GROW

Going through trouble in life is a part of life. God’s word describes a world that has been fractured by sin and we currently live in a broken world, where there are hardships, sickness and relational damage happening all around us. The question isn’t how can we escape troubles, but how do we cling to God and have peace despite our troubles?

Let’s read John 16:33

The New American Commentary on John states:

The world, Jesus said, is not an easy place in which to live. As a result the followers of Jesus are subject to “tribulation” (RSV), “trouble” (NIV), “persecution” (NRSV), “trials and sorrows” (NLT). The word *thlipsin* (singular, but undoubtedly with a collective sense) appears only here and at 16:21 to refer to pains in childbirth and is undoubtedly used to suggest serious difficulties for Christians.

But in spite of such predicted troubles in the world, the followers of Jesus were called to encouragement because Jesus had “overcome” the world. The use of the perfect *nenikēka* was obviously intended by John to communicate a proleptic sense of victory even before the crucifixion. It is the only use of this battle term in the Gospel, although it is used a number of times in 1 John, where the stress is on winning the victory against both the evil one and the inauthentic ways of the world (2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5 plus the noun *nike*, “victory,” at 5:4; cf. also the many uses of the term in the Apocalypse).

The Gospel of John and 1 John are not books that proclaim a defeatist attitude. They are realistic in that they take suffering, persecution, and martyrdom very seriously, just as the Book of Revelation takes them seriously. They are books of encouragement in the face of anxiety and genuine concern. They do not call the followers of Jesus to superficial discipleship but to a self-giving obedience modeled on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Shalom they offer is not the peace of the world (14:27) because that peace is not peace, for it ends in violence (Rev 6:4). So in spite of all the concerns of the disciples, this ring of anxiety begins and ends with a message of hope—an ultimate hope to be with Jesus in his specially prepared place (14:1) and a hope of victory for living in a world of hatred and trouble (16:33).

Our faith in God is a victorious faith. Regardless of what we face, Jesus has overcome it all and although we may walk through difficulty, we are promised his peace and that he will never leave us or forsake us. This helps give us hope, so that we don’t turn inward and wonder why troubles are happening to us, but helps us remember that Jesus knew that we would experience them and that is precisely why he chose to forewarn us that troubles would come.

When troubles come, what is your first response you typically have with God?

What does this mean: "...take heart! I (Jesus) have overcome the world."

MOVE

Throughout the message, Shawn spoke about the importance of doing a few things when we find ourselves walking through troubles. We must choose to run toward God and not away from him when we are facing difficulty and heartbreak. Shawn talked about the importance of choosing to "*Pray, Read, Worship and to Stop suffering alone.*"

Let's choose to remember what God's truth says about each of these by reading together:

Hebrews 4:16

Romans 15:4

Act 16:22-26

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

After reading these scriptures on prayer, reading, worship, and community, which of these do you feel you need more of in your life?

How can people be praying for you this week?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO.

Philippians 4:6,7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Additional Books about difficulty and suffering:

* *Ruthless Trust* by Brennan Manning and *Glorious Ruin* by Tullian Tchividjian are two phenomenal books that help people walk through difficulty and suffering.