

## **Suffering Our Attitude and Response**

Some of the people we know and love, perhaps even some of us are undergoing severe trials; emotional, physical, and spiritual. Job serves as a good example to us all. In his difficulties, far more than we will likely ever experience, Job did not seem to blame God. At times he felt sorry for himself, and questioned why it was happening, but he maintained his trust in the Lord, and was finally granted wisdom to accept what was happening to him, and finally receive a reward of grace.

Prompted by Paul's words in Romans 5 let us talk a little about our attitude toward and in response to suffering. In His epistle Paul wrote: "...we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Rom. 5:2b-5)

### **1) What attitude did Paul express in his sufferings and why?**

Let's consider some other things that Paul said regarding his attitude toward suffering:

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Rom. 8:17)

### **2) What does this verse say about how our relationship with God is connected with suffering and future glory?**

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18)

### **3) What attitude toward suffering does Paul encourage us to have in this verse?**

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose... What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ...In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8:28, 31-32, 37)

### **4) What does Paul understand about the struggles of life, and the love of God that help him face every situation with confidence, and a winning attitude?**

Now let's consider what other men of God have written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ...Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ...So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." (I Pet. 2:21; 4:12-13, 19)

### **5) Whose example do we follow in our suffering?**

### **6) How do these verses answer the question, "why me?" Is it just you?**

**7) What attitude does Peter express?**

“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ..Because He Himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Heb. 2:10, 18)

**8) While your suffering is shared by others, in this verse who in particular has shared in your suffering?**

**9) What did God accomplish through that suffering, and how does it help you?**

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:3-11)

**10) Upon whom do we focus in our sufferings and why?**

**11) What does suffering indicate about our relationship with God?**

**12) What is the goal of our Heavenly Father’s discipline through suffering?**

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (I Pet. 1:6-7)

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)

**13) How does our suffering work to “perfect” us?**

Now let’s look at what Paul says regarding our response to suffering: “Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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 minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:4-6)

**11) What does Paul offer as the antidote to anxiety in times of trouble, and what does he promise will come upon us?**

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.” (Rom. 8:26-27)

**12) What assurance do we have regarding our prayers in times of trouble or suffering?**

Again, from another New Testament writer: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord...” (James 1:5-7)

**13) What do these verses say regarding our response of prayer in time of suffering?**

A Concluding Promise:

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

**14) Even if our suffering continues, what will the Lord certainly give us?**