

## Dealing With Suffering

### I. Definitions

1. Suffering *n.* - 1. Patient endurance; long-suffering. *Obs.* 2. The bearing or undergoing of pain, distress, or tribulation. b. The action of suffering death; execution; martyrdom. *Obs.* 3. A painful condition; pain suffered.
2. Suffer *v.* - I. To undergo, endure. 1. *trans.* To have (something painful, distressing, or injurious) inflicted or imposed upon one; to submit to with pain, distress, or grief. a. pain, death, punishment, judgement; hardship, disaster; grief, sorrow, care. b. wrong, injury, loss, shame, disgrace. c. bodily injury or discomfort, a blow, wound, disease. *arch.*

### II. Suffering is inevitable in this fallen world.

1. The wages of sin is death (**Rom 6:23**).
2. The process of dying is painful (**Psa 116:3; Act 2:24**).
  - A. Sorrow *n.* - 1. a. Distress of mind caused by loss, suffering, disappointment, etc.; grief, deep sadness or regret; also, that which causes grief or melancholy; affliction, trouble.
  - B. Pain *n.* - 1. a. Suffering or loss inflicted for a crime or offence; punishment; penalty; a fine. 2. a. A primary condition of sensation or consciousness, the opposite of pleasure; the sensation which one feels when hurt (in body or mind); suffering, distress.
3. Because of sin our lives will be lived in pain and sorrow on the earth (**Gen 3:16-17**).

### III. God's children are not exempt from suffering.

1. In fact, we have been appointed to it (**Php 1:29**).
2. The more godly we are, the more suffering we can expect (**2Ti 3:12**).
  - A. Paul was a chosen vessel of God to bear His name to Gentiles, kings, and Jews (**Act 9:15**).
  - B. Therefore he would suffer greatly for Christ's sake (**Act 9:16**).
  - C. Pastors should expect to suffer in this life.
  - D. I remember early in my ministry talking with a dear pastor friend of mine after listening to sermon on the suffering of Job at a pastor's conference. I said to him that I thought that I was in for a lot of suffering during my ministry. Having been in the ministry himself for a long time, with tears welling up in his eyes, he said that he thought I was right. I was.
3. Jesus suffered much in His life on earth (**Isa 53:3-5, 7-8, 10-11**).
  - A. If we are to be the followers of Christ, we must likewise take up our cross like He did (**Luk 9:22-23**).
  - B. Cross *n.* - B. Signification. I. The instrument of crucifixion with its representations and fig. applications. 1. A kind of gibbet used by the ancients (and in later times by some non-Christian nations); a stake, generally with a transverse bar, on which they put to a cruel and ignominious death certain criminals, who were nailed or otherwise fastened to it by their extremities. 10. a. A trial or affliction viewed in its Christian aspect, to be borne for Christ's sake with Christian patience; often in phr. **to bear, take one's cross**, with reference to Matt. x. 38, xvi. 24, etc.
  - C. Don't ever let Satan deceive you into thinking that if you are suffering you are *necessarily* being punished by God.
    - i. You may be, but you might not be.

- ii. If you are suffering, examine your life to see if there is sin in it that you are being punished for (**Lam 3:39-40**).
  - iii. If there is not, then you can conclude that God is allowing you to suffer for another reason.
  - iv. Sometimes God allows people to suffer, not because they are more sinful than others, but for His own reasons not known to us (**Luk 13:1-3**).
4. As Christians, we will not necessarily be spared bodily suffering as we near death.
- A. Though it is perplexing, often times wicked people don't suffer when they die (**Psa 73:3-5**).
  - B. Take comfort though because our suffering ends at death (**Luk 16:20-22**), but theirs begins (**Luk 16:23**).

#### IV. Why do Christians suffer?

1. We are under the curse of sin.
2. We deserve it; and we deserve much more than we get (**Ezr 9:13**).
3. It draws us to God and makes us lean on Him (**2Co 12:7-10**).
4. It brings us into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ (**Php 3:10**).
5. It works patience, experience, and hope in us (**Rom 5:3-5**).
  - A. Patience *n.* - 1. a. The suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure; the quality or capacity of so suffering or enduring.
  - B. Experience *n.* - 1. a. The action of putting to the test; trial. *to make experience of:* to make trial of. *Obs.*
  - C. Hope *n.* - 1. a. Expectation of something desired; desire combined with expectation.
6. It burns off the wood, hay, and stubble of our lives (**1Co 3:12-15**).
7. It gives us an opportunity to be an example to others (**1Th 1:6-7**).
8. It encourages others to be faithful (**Php 1:13-14**).
9. It brings God glory when His people suffer for righteousness (**Act 5:40-41; 1Pe 4:16**).
10. It brings God glory when He heals us of our affliction (**Joh 9:1-3**).
11. It makes us anticipate and desire heaven.
  - A. Many of God's children love this life far too much.
    - i. Most Christians that I know are not ready to die.
    - ii. We must not count our lives dear unto ourselves (**Act 20:24**).
    - iii. We must love not our lives unto the death (**Rev 12:11**).
  - B. If we love our life we'll lose it (**Joh 12:25**).
  - C. Many Christians are not ready to die, despite the fact that to depart and be with Christ is *far better* (**Php 1:21-23**).
    - i. For such Christians, suffering may be necessary to make them seek heavenly things instead of earthly things (**Col 3:1-2**).
    - ii. Have you ever noticed that, normally speaking, the only Christians who are ready to die and are looking forward to it are those who are very old, tired, in a lot of pain, and can't do much?
    - iii. This should not be true of Christians who hate their sin and this sinful world and who believe that to be with Christ in heaven is *far better*.
  - D. God wants us to put Him first in our lives (**Mat 22:37**) and diligently seek Him (**Heb 11:6**).
    - i. If we are happy to live in this world and be absent from the Lord (**2Co 5:6**), God might just make us suffer to the point that we have no pleasure in this life (**Ecc 12:1**) and long to die and be in heaven with Him.

- ii. This is not to say that suffering is always a judgment from God.
  - iii. If our desire to remain in this life is due to our selfless aspiration to take care of those who depend on us, then that is acceptable with God (**Php 1:24**).
  - iv. If our desire to live longer is based on our yearning to serve and worship God and teach others about Him while in this flesh, then that is likewise acceptable with God (**Isa 38:18-19**).
  - v. But if our desire to lengthen our life is so that we can enjoy ourselves down here and pursue our hopes, dreams, and happiness, then we better get ready to suffer in order to get our priorities aligned with God's.
- E. "God teaches us, in the midst of life's greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and, in the midst of its greatest crosses, to be willing to live." (Matthew Henry)

#### V. How to suffer as a Christian.

1. Thank God for it (**1Th 5:18**).
2. Thank God it's not worse.
3. Be joyful through it (**1Pe 4:12-13**).
4. Take it to God in prayer (**1Pe 4:19**).
5. Don't murmur or complain (**Php 2:14-15**).
  - A. Murmur *n.* - 1. a. Subdued continuous or continuously repeated sound; an instance of this. Now *rare exc.* in the murmur of (a brook, the waves, etc.). 2. †a. The expression of discontent or anger by inarticulate complaint; muttered or indistinct complaint, grumbling or repining. *Obs.* b. An instance of this; an act of murmuring or repining; a subdued expression of discontent.
  - B. Murmur *v.* - 1. *intr.* To make, produce, or emit a low continuous sound. 2. To complain or repine in low muttered tones; to give vent to an inarticulate discontent, to grumble. Often with *at, against*.
6. Don't lash out at others (**1Pe 2:23; 1Co 13:4**).
7. Don't blame God (**Job 1:20-22; Job 2:9-10**).
8. Don't be bitter (**Eph 4:31**).
9. Don't say "Why me?"
10. Remember that God will not give you more than you can take (**1Co 10:13**).

#### VI. Take comfort in sufferings.

1. Count it all joy when you suffer (**Jam 1:2-3**).
2. God lets us suffer a while in order to afterwards make us perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled (**1Pe 5:10**).
3. If we suffer like Christ did, we will be glorified with Him (**Rom 8:17**).
4. The suffering of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits us (**Rom 8:18**).
5. Sometimes Christians suffer death early than others to be spared the evil to come (**Isa 57:1**). If that happens to you, be grateful.
6. If we endure our suffering faithfully unto death, we shall be given a crown of life (**Rev 2:10**).
7. Our suffering here is only temporary. There will be no suffering when we get to our eternal home (**Rev 21:3-4**).